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THE

MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS AND NOVELS

OF

R. C. DALLAS, ESQ.

IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

THE FIRST VOLUME OF AUBREY.

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AUBREY.

Sweet are the uses of Adversity. SHAKSPEARE.

That misery does not make all virtuous, experience too clearly informs us; but it is no less certain that, of what virtue there is, misery produces the far greater part. JOHNSON.

VOL. I.

ORIGINAL DEDICATION OF AUBREY.

TO

M. BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE,

ONE OF THE CONFIDENTIAL MINISTERS
OF LOUIS XVI.

SIR,

In addressing you, I might, without the hazard of being called a flatterer, imitate those authors who have considered dedications as the vehicles of unbounded praise, since the public are well acquainted with the topics on which I could justly found an eulogium; with that unshaken loyalty which, amid daily imminent dangers of your life, kept you to the last in the councils of your Royal Master; with that disinterested attachment to his person which prompted you to devote your fortune to him; and with those eminent talents which, for some months, supported the last hopes of his throne: but this task belongs to the historian.

Besides, I confess, that it was no feature in your public character which impelled me to wish your name at the head of these volumes. What all the world know of you, all the world will admire: but, while I concur in their admiration, permit me to

say, that I have ever through life felt my affections more attracted by the private virtues of men, than by the most brilliant career, either in the cabinet or the field. The virtues of the statesman and of the warrior are buoyed up by the glory that surrounds them; talents and a bold spirit exalt them in the eyes of their fellow-creatures; fame, and wealth, and honour are their reward. But take them from their splendid sphere, and place them under the dominion of adversity, where virtue is left to itself: if, endowed with fortitude, they yield nobly to the will of Providence, if they extract advantages from exile and from ruin, if they open new sources of happiness in their mind, and if they make opportunities of manifesting a benevolent heart, their sphere of action may be contracted, but their soul is the more elevated; and love, and gratitude, and self-applause crown their retreat.

In the latter point of view, Sir, it has been my good fortune to see you; a philosopher, historian, philanthropist, and friend. While the tear I have seen you shed for your king raised my respect, my affection was riveted by that which the tenderness of your heart bestowed on a promising youth, snatched from fond parents by an unexpected death. Your kindness to the father of that youth, the desire you have shown to serve him, the services you have rendered him, are deeply impressed upon his heart, which, as long as it beats, will feel for you the highest esteem and affection.

But, however desirous to testify these feelings, I should probably not have thought of presenting a Novel to you, had not the progress of its subject (the severe trial of principle in adversity) brought to my mind the wonderful resignation and prudence of every class of the emigrants from France. In describing the difficulty of submitting to the re-

verses of fortune, I recollected their accommodating their desires and wants to their means. Those who had once lived in the highest style of magnificence, having saved some little portion of their property, retrenched every superfluity; and those who had saved nothing from the general wreck, chearfully applied themselves to industry for support. I recollected, at the same time, that, besides the arduous task of writing the Annals of the Revolution of France*, you frequently employed your leisure in composing works of imagination and taste; and I knew that you were not of the number of fastidious readers who affect to despise all novels; I therefore scrupled not to offer to you this tale.

While I am gratified at your accepting it, let me not forget to acknowledge, that I am conscious of the advantage it will derive from your name; whatever interest it possesses will be thrown into stronger light, and its blemishes into shade.

Camberwell Grove,
March 23, 1804.

* Mr. Bertrand's Annals of the French Revolution were first published in English, translated from his MSS. by the author of this novel: the original was afterwards published at Paris. Both editions may be had at the house of Messrs. Cadell and Davies.

PREFACE.

The success of the novel which was published under the title of *Percival, or Nature Vindicated*, induced the publishers of it to express a desire, that I would undertake another. I accordingly wrote what is now offered to those indulgent readers who approved my former attempt; and I hope that the present tale will be found sufficiently interesting to preserve that approbation, which has been rendered doubly valuable to me, by the pleasure it has given to those whom I love. But hope must not blind me to the risk I run: I am now aware that I undertook a more difficult task in the present, than in the former novel; and the more I write, the more sensible I become of the difficulty of writing well. It is easier to compose a volume of friendly letters, communicating facts, which, with a little art, may be formed into a connected story, than to address a fictitious history to the public in a regular series of chapters; I fear, therefore, that Aubrey will need even more indulgence than Percival; yet, whatever the defects of the composition may be, I cannot but hope that they will be counterbalanced by moral tendency and grateful incidents. To the critics, I leave the task of exposing my errors, of detecting the length of a seemingly collateral story, the abrupt termination that leaves something to fancy, and the inequalities of my style; while I take advantage of the opportunity a Preface affords to make a few observations respecting novels.

It has become a fashion with some, to speak of them with great contempt; and now, not only deep politicians and grave divines decry the very name,

but we even sometimes hear young ladies boasting their distaste to such reading: "Oh! I never read novels;" is a sentence uttered by many a pretty mouth, in these days of novel-reading; and when it is sincere, and is the result of filial love and respect, of attention to the advice of sensible parents, it is laudable in the highest degree. However, as I have now written two novels, I feel it incumbent upon me to endeavour to set the contemners of such works to rights, and to prevail upon them not to generalize their contempt. And to shew how little intention I have to gain my object by any fallacy, I will cite the opinion of a man, who holds a very high rank in the scale of understanding; one to whom the world is already greatly indebted, and will be still more so, when it is more worthy of his exertions.

"As to the sort of reading most injurious to young "females," says Dr. Beddoes, "I cordially assent "to the opinion of almost all men of reflection. "Novels, undoubtedly, are the most injurious.— "Novels render the sensibility still more diseased. "They increase indolence; the imaginary world in- "disposing those who inhabit it in thought, to go "abroad into the real. For useful lessons, doubt- "less, no vehicle is fitter than fictitious biography. "It may exhibit select scenes only; but those "scenes should never swell beyond the compass of "life. Fiction begins with being extravagant; but "its extravagancies become ridiculous. Its tone "then grows gradually lower and juster; and it "satisfies the longer, the less it attempts to surprise. "..... The common love stories are justly "regarded as abominable: they relax soul and body "at once."

Nothing can be juster than these sentiments of this philanthropic physician; yet hostile as he is

to the injurious reading he alludes to, he himself teaches us, that there is no fitter vehicle for useful lessons than fictitious biography. If, by the word novel, be meant extravagant fictions, and abominable love-stories, I cordially join to hold up my hand against them; but if it be applicable to a series of credible incidents, wrought into an interesting story, in which occasion is taken to paint, with a cautious and delicate pencil, the nature of man, his good sense and his folly, his virtues and his vices, his passions and caprices, to give an amiable colouring to worth, to hold a mirror to villainy, and to erect beacons for youth, I could almost say, in the promotion of religion and morality, borrowing the turn of thought used by a wit of the last century, in allusion to politics, let me write the novels for the age, and any body may write the sermons. This sentiment is true to a proverb; one so hackneyed, that I should blush to argue from it, did it not seem to be forgotten in the indiscriminate condemnation passed on novels, in which example and precept unite so forcibly. Viewed in this light, far from holding a contemptible rank in the scale of literature, they are, perhaps, of greater consequence than many works addressed solely to the intellect; and certainly do more honour to the understanding, as well as to the heart, than all the volumes that have been littered, time after time, by the philosophy of the age of reason. In any point of view, they are not more objectionable than the drama; and in spite of the affected phraseology of pretended critics, they have a just claim to rank near, if not equal to it.

If there be any danger of this reading spoiling the relish of important studies; if it lead to the neglect of history and biography; if it induce an indolence destructive to health, I affirm that the blame does not rest with the nature of the reading, nor with

those young persons to whom it is agreeable, but with those under whose guidance the readers are, or have been. If parents, or their substitutes, neglect to cultivate the minds of young women, weeds will grow, the soil will become a ruinate, bad novels, boldly seized, or secretly obtained, will complete the destruction commenced by mismanagement or neglect; but they who know how to fortify the soul, to direct taste, and satisfy curiosity with propriety; who are acquainted with the principles that constitute health of mind and body, and who have activity enough to practise the theory they approve, will find considerable assistance in good novels. I had the happiness of knowing a young lady, who, under the direction of her father, was acquainted with a considerable number of novels: I say acquainted, because some of the best he read to her, for the purpose of omitting parts that were improper for the perusal of a pure mind, as well as to explain the reason of the omission; and so great a command had she attained over the passion of curiosity, that no persuasion could have prevailed upon her to open a book, or a page, which he had condemned to neglect. I attribute this to the candour with which he conversed with her on all subjects: of course, none of the injurious trash stigmatised in the quotation I have made ever sullied her hands. The acquaintance she had with the novels which her father thought worthy of perusal, far from injuring or weakening her mind, assisted to exalt it; and I have seen her go with delight from Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, to extract, chronologize, and analyze his History of England; from Robinson Crusoe to the British Nepos; from the Cavern in Gil Blas to Gilpin's Lecture on the Catechism, which she copied verbatim in a fair hand. The bad passions she read of raising her detestation, and ex-

amples proving the danger of the best, she saw the beauty as well as necessity of self-command: her virtues daily gained strength, and at the age of eighteen Providence judged her ripe for heaven.

With repect to this novel, as well as Percival, my aim has been to make the pleasure arising from a combination of interesting incidents conducive to the sacred impressions of virtue and religion; and in the management of the story, I have endeavoured not to overstep the modesty of nature. Though the series of facts never took place, there are none feigned but what might very naturally occur. Love, the great danger of novels, is not painted in that hyperbolical, romantic character, which is the offspring of distempered imagination; but in colours that do honour to it, and render it not the bane, but the support of society. As my aim will be very evident, I leave Aubrey in the hands of the public, with a renewed hope of their indulgence.

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AUBREY.

CHAPTER I.

Remarks proper to introduce a reverse of fortune—an account of the house of Aubrey, and a notable dream.

POVERTY has been represented as the mother of crimes; and, notwithstanding the observation of La Bruyere, that, if so, the father of them must be a defective mind*, the position has been supported by the authority of a later genius†, who considered it as a rock too often fatal to virtue.

Wealth has been no less regarded as dangerous to morals and religion, as the source of corruption, and the hot-bed of vice. La Bruyere's observation is, perhaps, more applicable to the latter than to the former case; for poverty is a narrow, turbid torrent, dashing along huge rocks, and over frightful cataracts, to struggle against which requires a strength almost superhuman; whereas, the barks of the fortunate are lodged upon the glassy, unruffled surface of a spacious lake, adorned with

* Si la pauvreté est la mère des crimes, le defaut de l'esprit en est le père. *La Bruyere.*

† Dr. Johnson.

islands of varied beauties, where it might be imagined impossible that virtue should be wrecked, were not the fact confirmed by daily experience; from which it should seem, that every degree of superfluous wealth were dangerous to weak men. But it is not so clear what degree of want constitutes that poverty which saps principle; and, by placing men of strong minds in the dreadful alternative of despair, or vice, impels them to a disregard of the means by which they satisfy the calls of nature, or the claims of habit. There are, indeed, extreme cases; and severe must be the moralist who scrutinizes the errors of them; who does not allow the merit of a manly struggle even when unsuccessful. But extreme cases are rare, and adversity, if not clad in her Gorgon terrors, is known to be the nurse of virtue. Could all men of wealth be suckled at her breast, sweet in time would they find the use of her milk, and securely might they launch their barks upon the waters of fortune.

"Oh! my Emily! if, by my uncle's negligence, "I am reduced to poverty, am I not still rich in "the affections of the heart? am I not the happiest "of husbands, the most blest of fathers? I will not, "indeed I will not forget the tender suggestions "of your care; but neglect not you, my love, I im- "plore you, the affectionate advice you gave me at "our parting: prepare to receive with fortitude a "confirmation of the tidings of misfortune, and let "love and virtue keep you from sinking under it." These words were part of a letter written to an amiable and beautiful woman, who, after having been eighteen years the wife of Aubrey, was still the idol of her husband. They had been travelling to vary the scenes of life, a necessity known only to the rich and idle, and had reached Chantilly, in their way to the south of France, when Aubrey received

intelligence of the sudden death of his uncle, whose heir-at-law he was, accompanied by a letter from his attorney, expressing great apprehension that the will made for the purpose of disinheriting him had never been revoked.

Aubrey was descended from a noble family, who, although the title had become extinct for more than one generation, remained as proud of their blood as if they had been still in possession of all its honours. They carried this pride to such a pitch, that they hardly deigned to speak with civility to persons who had the misfortune to have no blood, and they never acknowledged acquaintance with any in that vulgar predicament. Aubrey himself was the only one whose brain had escaped this sanguimania, a defect of spirit which he had been too prudent to reveal, as he was entirely dependent upon his uncle Arthur, who was the head of the house, and in whom its fortunes centered.

The small patrimony which had fallen to the lot of his father had been completely exhausted in an agitated struggle to support a proper dignity, and in supplying Aubrey's elder brother with the means of making a figure on his travels; though, in either case, to little purpose; for that hope of the family, falling into a dispute in Switzerland with one of his own countrymen, who ridiculed his pompous pretensions, received a wound in a duel, which soon lowered him to a level with the departed generations of William Tell; and his parents, after surviving him a few years, during which they were pensioned by Aubrey's uncle, sunk dejected into the common receptacle of all whose blood has ceased to flow; leaving their second son, William, then their only child, dependent on his uncle.

This gentleman had long resigned all hope of transmitting the precious blood of Aubrey to pos-

terity himself, and had been accustomed to consider the elder son of his brother as the next representative of his house. He sincerely lamented his death; not that he was deficient in affection for his nephew William; but there were two circumstances combined in the person of the latter, of a nature sufficiently vexatious to make him doubly regret the loss of his brother. In the first place, his name was not ARTHUR, which, through a long line of Aubreys, had seldom failed to distinguish their representatives: and, in the next, he was in holy orders, for which he had been educated, and which he had taken previous to his brother's death, with the view of his being provided for in the church. Now, it had ever been the opinion of his uncle, that any profession but a military one was unsuitable to the head of an ancient house. These important objections excepted, he saw nothing in Aubrey that made him less agreeable than his brother; for he had never taken the trouble to penetrate into the recesses of his bosom, nor had he discovered that his education had expanded his mind to liberal views of God's creation, till he at the same time found that he had disgraced his family by a marriage with a woman of low birth, unconnected and unknown.

The year that Aubrey took priest's orders, which was just before he lost his brother, he resided at the university of Cambridge, where he by no means played the cynic. He had read, and his ideas were liberal; but he was no pedant, either in books or manners. He had never considered it as a duty to combat the opinions and habits of the world; he found he had a good birth in it, and was content to look on with indifference, and to follow the beaten path of decency and pleasure. He had studied his profession, as is but too frequently the case, with a view to preferment, rather than with any intention

of founding his own hope on its faith, or of guiding a flock into the general fold of the great Shepherd. His heart was extremely susceptible; and, if his hope and faith were passive, not so was the third apostolic virtue; he felt exquisitely for others, and his charity was active and unbounded; pity and love were the strongest passions of his heart.

One day after hunting, having followed the hounds to a very great distance from Cambridge, he hired a hackney, on which he was returning home at an easy pace, and riding negligently. About nine miles from the college, in a cross-country, going down a hill in a solitary lane, the horse fell with him, and pitched him off with such force, that he came head-foremost to the ground, and was bereft of his senses. When he revived, he found himself on a couch in a small parlour, attended by an elderly woman, very plainly dressed, but whose manners bespoke a situation superior to the appearances about her. Raising himself, and inquiring where he was, she informed him that he was not a hundred yards from the place where he fell from his horse; and that he had been brought to her cottage by two countrymen, who had seen the accident, one of whom she had dispatched for a surgeon, who, she had no doubt, would be with them presently.

Aubrey thanked the good old lady for her care and kindness; and, making light of his bruise, said he would ride more cautiously home; but feared that, if he staid for the doctor, he should be benighted. The lady observed, that the contusion he had received was by no means a slight one, and was persuading him that it would be rash to proceed without some advice, when her arguments were rendered conclusive by the appearance of the surgeon, who, on examination, found the concussion produced by the fall to be so serious as to require

instant bleeding, and declared, he thought that the gentleman could not venture to ride nine miles without danger. Could he hire a post-chaise? There was none nearer than Huntingdon, and it would be dark before it could be procured. Another dilemma arose; there was no convenient inn near the spot. "Make yourself easy, Sir," said the hospitable lady, whose name was Melvil, "though "you are but in a cottage, I have a good bed at your "service; and, after what Mr. Rowe has said, I can- "not think of suffering you to depart to-night. There "is a small public-house at a little distance, where "your horse will be taken care of; and you must per- "mit me to take care of you here." Aubrey was not deficient in grateful expressions; and, it being settled that he should remain all night under this good lady's roof, Mr. Rowe advised him to go to bed immediately, and compose himself; adding, that he was confident, if he rested well, he might proceed on his journey as early as he pleased in the morning. He then took his leave; and Aubrey was conducted by Mrs. Melvil through a brick-paved kitchen, larger than the parlour, and from which a small, light stair-case led to the bed-rooms. Three doors opened on the landing-place: he was introduced into the room fronting the stairs; and Mrs. Melvil begging he would ring the bell without ceremony, if he wanted any thing, wished him a good night.

Being alone, he congratulated himself on the appearance of his chamber, which was not only larger than the rest of the tenement promised, but furnished in the neatest manner. The furniture of the bed and the window-curtains were made of real chintz, as were the covers of four chairs standing in the room; on the left side, approaching the window, was a small chest of drawers, and opposite stood a

slight mahogany table: in the window, which was a bow, there was a toilette dressed with taste, though the frame of the looking-glass was old-fashioned, which, as well as the dragon-china bason and ewer, looked something like an heir-loom. The toilette, and a muff-box that stood by it, indicated the chamber to be appropriated to a female; and, after contemplating it, Aubrey, who at first was pleased with his good fortune, began to be distressed at the idea that Mrs. Melvil, in the zeal of her hospitality to accommodate him, had given up her own room. His first emotion would have impelled him to return to the parlour and remonstrate with the good hostess against a kindness so painful to his feelings; but on consideration, being persuaded that it would be of no use, and that the debate would terminate with his being reconducted to the chintz-room, not to say that the supposition he had formed would have the appearance of presumption, he concluded that a silent acquiescence was the truer testimony of politeness; and, taking possession of one of the most comfortable beds he ever slept in, soon closed all the avenues of perception against the objects of the senses.

Not so passive was imagination. His sleep was disturbed; for, notwithstanding the blood he had lost, the shock his whole frame had received continued to agitate his nerves, and produced a dream, which, it will appear, he thought of much greater importance than Olympia's, or any other classic dream, though he was a scholar. He supposed himself reclining in a grove, on an eminence of beautiful verdure, surrounded by corn fields, ready to yield their golden crop to the sickle. Behind the fields were sloping hills, here and there covered with lofty trees; beneath the shades of which fat kine, avoiding the sun's meridian beams, lay chewing the cud

in luxurious repose. At the foot of the hillock where he reclined ran a brook, limpid and shallow; and beyond it appeared other fields, of which the harvest was already gathered into knots of sheaves. As he gazed on these, his head resting on his hand, an angelic form appeared, slowly approaching the brook, every instant stooping and rising as it moved along. The figure coming nearer, he perceived it to be a female of dazzling beauty, collecting the straggling ears of corn which had escaped the attention of the husbandman, or haply wilfully overlooked to swell the little handful of the gleaner. His admiration of her beauty was increased into rapture at the placid content of her countenance in the steady pursuit of her humble labour. His bosom swelled with pity to behold such loveliness in indigence: he compared her activity with the indolence of his own supine posture; and he rose, resolved to offer her one of the uncropped fields on his side of the rivulet.

He beckoned to her; but she, on perceiving him, turned her steps a different way. He walked hastily down the eminence to the brook; it was no longer a shallow, limpid stream, but a deep, broad torrent of blood, that stopped his way: to wade through it was impossible, to swim in it was horrible. Confounded by this obstacle, he raised his eyes from it, and fixed them on the object of his admiration, who now stood on the other bank, waving him to be gone. The motion that advised his departure was completely counteracted by the grace with which it was made. He pointed to his fields; she smiled, and shook her head. The grace of her waving hand had riveted his feet to the spot where he stood; but that which played over her lips and on her neck, when she smiled and shook her head, loosened them again; and now, wondering that he should suffer himself to

be impeded by such a paltry obstacle, he stepped with as much ease from one bank to the other, as the Macedonian hero in his waking vision cut the Gordian knot; or, as if the deep, broad torrent of blood had been a mere gutter. Such, asleep or awake, is the power of imagination.

He had, however, only gained a step; for, no sooner was he on the opposite bank, than the visionary nymph was half across the field. He pursues her; she flies, looking back at every step. Not swifter, nor more gracefully, did Atalanta lead the race, on which a prince's love and life depended. In vain the dreamer, straining every sinew, exerts his utmost speed; the airy Atalanta every instant increases the distance between her and her eager pursuer: nor had he, hapless youth! those tempting apples, by which Hippomenes seduced and outstripped the swift-footed damsel. He had surely lost her, but for the friendly interposition of one of the genii of dreams, who tripped him up against a tuft of stubble, and laid him at his length upon the field. The amiable concern that inhabits the female breast was the golden apple here. He thought that, overcome by her feeling at seeing him fall, she flew as swiftly to his assistance as she had fled from his pursuit.

He now seemed transported to the grove on the eminence, where he lay when he first saw her. The surrounding scenery revived to his imagination in the first forms it had worn; the fields, the sloping hills, the lofty trees, the reposing kine. The brook again ran limpid and shallow, and beyond it the wheat was gathered into knots of sheaves. Beside him sat the lovely gleaner, careless as himself, enjoying the tranquil scene; and ever and anon they smiled upon each other, and interchanged caresses. This continued some time, when an evil genius took the

reins of fancy. The ground began to move; they started up, and clasped each other in their arms. The eminence rises gradually into the air; the corn fields become dry, sandy plains; the hills and woods turn to a barren heath; the kine to ravenous wolves, hunting for prey; the channel of the brook and farther fields, are dry beds of huge, rugged rocks and useless stones. The eminence on which they stood is now a gigantic hand, stretched out from the body of a monster, twice the size of the famed colossus. Thunder rolls from his nostrils, lightnings flash from his eyes. Spreading wide the palm of the hand that upheld them in the air, the giant gazed at them for a moment with horribly distorted features, then stretching out his arm over the bed of rocks, he deliberately turned his hand, and * * * * * * * * * * *.

It is an effect of extreme terror to deprive a waking man of his senses; it has a contrary effect on the dreamer, whom it rouses and restores to recollection. In the one case, the blood is thrown too suddenly from the heart, and flies with undue rapidity and quantity to the brain: in the other, the violent agitation of the nervous fluid in the brain accelerates its drowsy progress through the complicated organs of the senses, and increasing the circulation of the blood, dispels its congregated vapours. The last part of Aubrey's dream was terrible: the tremendous height at which the gigantic hand was turned, shook his whole frame; he lost sight of his fair companion long before he reached the mid-way of his fall; and, instead of being dashed to pieces on the bed of rocks below, found himself alone in Mrs. Melvil's chintz-bed, trembling every limb.

The morning was advanced; Aubrey rose, and, notwithstanding the turbulent state in which he awoke, was sufficiently refreshed to pursue his jour-

ney. Before he left his chamber, he again admired the neatness of it. On drawing up the window-curtains, he discovered that it was the upper part of a building, which had been added to a mere cottage; it looked into a small, but pretty garden. Having completed his dress, he left the room, and was met at the bottom of the stairs by his smiling hostess, who, inquiring after his health, conducted him to the little parlour in which he had been the night before; where he found breakfast prepared, and the surgeon ready to dismiss him from the cottage. Aubrey proposed to ride with Mr. Rowe, if he was going the same way; but that not being the case, he slipped two guineas into his hand, and, repeating his gratitude to the hospitable woman for her benevolent treatment, he mounted his hackney, and, riding with more caution, reached Cambridge without another fall.

CHAPTER II.

Slight actions indicate the soil of benevolence—A visit of gratitude.

AUBREY's dream made a very strong impression on his mind; for, though the fall over the tuft of stubble, and the precipitation from the gigantic hand, might be naturally ascribed to the accident he had met with, there seemed to be a more regular combination of circumstances than generally appears in dreams; and, as soon as he got to his apartments in the college, he wrote it in his common-place book.

The kind countenance of the benevolent Mrs. Melvil frequently occurred to his recollection. He loved a benevolent action even of a trifling nature,

and his gratitude to the person who performed it, whoever were the objects, kept no pace with the degree of the service rendered. The picking up of a child who had hurt itself, the releasing of an entangled lamb, the saving of a cat from the hands of merciless boys going to tear it to pieces, indicated the noble soil of benevolence, the discovery of which always produced a grateful glow in the bosom of Aubrey. No wonder then that Mrs. Melvil's attention to himself had warmed his heart, and raised there an affection for her. He knew nothing of her, however, but what he had seen in consequence of his accident. She appeared to be in straitened circumstances, and, but for the chintz-room, he should have taken her for a very poor woman. His intention in proposing to ride with the surgeon was, to inquire into her situation; an inquiry which he afterwards made at Cambridge for more than a week without effect; nobody knew such a person, or such a place. He thought, however, that he owed her a visit of thanks, and he resolved to pay it.

He rode to the public-house where his horse had before been put up, and was directed through a foot-path over the fields. The path would have led him round the garden-fence, but, trying the latchet of the gate as he was going to pass it, he found it open. He went in without ceremony, and followed a narrow gravel-walk, that serpentined close to a lilac fence. As he proceeded he heard a voice accompanied by the piano-forte; and, going on, he soon came to a little opening, near the side of the room where he had slept. The bow of the window reached to the ground, and a glass-door, even with the garden, opened on the gravel-walk and close-mowed turf, which formed a little lawn before it. The door was wide open. The autumn had been remarkably serene

and warm, and, from a long continuation of Italian skies, was lingering with summer, and imperceptibly shaking hands with winter.

Aubrey, who was himself a good musician, stood listening in rapture to sounds which nature and art combined to render exquisite, and which he little expected to hear in the place whence they proceeded. The song was Handel's; *Behold thy servant in distress;* which, though familiar to his ear, Aubrey had never heard so sung before. When it was over, he remained in his place, mute, not knowing whether to go forward, or to return and seek the usual entrance to the cottage. He was a stranger, and had no right to break in upon the person in the room. It could not be Mrs. Melvil; and that whoever it was, was alone, seemed clear, from no plaudit or speaking following the song. It might be a friend of the good lady's, or some professional person lodging in her house. The voice, though powerful, was feminine. Before he had come to any resolution, the sound of a footstep, lightly crossing the room, reached his ear, and presently he heard the tuning of a harp. Again he was all attention. The execution of a fanciful prelude proved the player to be equally at home on this instrument as on the piano. A little Italian arrietta, *Ve com'è bello il mar*, with a running accompaniment, completely enchanted Aubrey; and, without considering, he gently stole forward till, coming opposite the door, he saw a young woman, of an elegant, slender form, plainly dressed, sitting at the harp, on a stool placed near the piano, with her back to the door, as if she had risen and drawn the instrument to the seat. She was playing without a book, and, though singing exquisitely, seemed to sing by rote, and wrapt in thought. She sung the same verses again and again.

By degrees, Aubrey had approached as imper-

ceptibly to himself as to the object on whom his eyes were fixed, till his person, darkening the door, drew her attention, and she suddenly turned. "Good "Heaven!" cried she, starting from her seat, and scarcely saving the harp from falling, "what do you "want, Sir?" The timid gesture, and expressive countenance, with which she put her question, removed the enchantment from Aubrey's ears to his eyes. "Forgive a stranger ——" He looked foolish, and said no more.—"Sir?" said the lady, as if requiring an answer.—"This I presume, Ma-"dam," cried he, recovering himself, "is Mrs. "Melvil's house?"—"It is, Sir."—"I am known "to her."—"I beg your pardon," replied she, seeming to recollect herself; "pray sit down; I "will call my mother." Saying which, she slightly bowed, and flew out of the room.

"Mother!" exclaimed Aubrey; "what an an-"gelic daughter!" Little did he think that this angel had held his hand in hers, had rubbed his temples, had made the bed on which he slept, had herself lain in it but the night before, and had given it up, for it was hers, to accommodate him. The fact was, that Miss Melvil, though her prudent mother thought proper to drop the circumstance, was the person who saw Aubrey fall, and called the men to carry him to the cottage. She had assisted her mother in all her endeavours to revive him, and foreseeing, when he began to recover, that he must stay all night at the cottage, had prepared her room for him; and, as her mother's bed was too small for two persons, had set out to get before dark to a neighbour's house, where she knew she could be accommodated. He had come to himself fully while she was busied up stairs; but, taking her mother's advice not to be seen, she had slipped out unperceived, and did not return the next day till Mrs.

Melvil walked over to her neighbour's to fetch her. At his sudden appearance in the parlour, she did not recollect him; but, on his saying that he was known to her mother, she thought she recognized his features.

Aubrey was soon joined by Mrs. Melvil, who, however, came alone. She assured him she was glad to see him so well; and he repeated his acknowledgments for her kindness. He then apologized for coming in through the garden, and surprising her daughter in the manner he had unintentionally done; and at last, finding she did not make her appearance, ventured to ask if he should not have the pleasure of seeing her. Mrs. Melvil, who foresaw this request, thought it better to comply with it as a matter of indifference, than to enter into an explanation with a stranger of the mode of life she and her daughter had adopted, in consequence of some occurrences that had taken place the year before; and, going to the door, called Miss Melvil, who instantly obeyed her summons. Emily Melvil was a clear brunette, with fine brown eyes. Her nose was gently aquiline; her lips and cheeks bore the vermilion of health; and her smile displayed a fine set of teeth. The contour of her face was a pleasing oval, and its expression heralded the emotions that rose in her mind. Her person was rather above the middle size, well formed, and replete with grace. This lovely girl entered the parlour with the mild dignity of simplicity, and, by her conversation, convinced Aubrey that her understanding was not inferior to her accomplishments. After talking for some time, he could not resist his desire to hear her sing again; and, having looked several times at the piano, ventured to ask the favour. She complied immediately; for she knew, that a refusal without good reason, was considered but as the bait of so-

licitation, and that to grant to entreaty what was denied to a simple request, proved some influence in the suppliant, if it did not show he was troublesome. He was desired to make choice of his music. A volume of Handel stood upon the desk; he turned over the leaves, and pitched upon *He shall feed his flock;* a delightful song, but which at the same time requires more taste than almost any other of Handel's to give it sweetness. The songstress had all the taste it required. Aubrey himself possessed one of the finest base voices ever heard, with which, on a repetition of the strain, he gave just and melodious counter-points. She involuntarily turned her head, and her eyes met his: her look was one of pleasure and surprise, and the fine hazel orbs beaming the sensations through the long dark lashes of the lids, as they were lifted towards Aubrey, penetrated the inmost recesses of his bosom. From this, novices would suppose that he now lost his heart, and was at once over head and ears in love. Hearts far less susceptible than Aubrey's would have felt the power of such a look; but, in defiance of the displeasure of some readers, truth must be told: many pleasing impressions are made through the senses, but never was genuine and lasting love produced by them alone. Certain it is, that Aubrey's eyes and ears were enchanted; but it will presently be seen how easily the real avenues of love were closed in his heart.

They who looked for an enamoured hero, expected no less a romantic heroine, bewildered in all the intricacies of the passion, the victorious passion, of love at first sight; but they will please to remember that, though they begin to be a little acquainted with Aubrey, they do not even know what kind of a person he had; and that, though they find Miss Melvil's ears charmed, it is not so clear that her

eyes were likewise delighted. They will also please to remember, that whoever professes to write memoirs must rigidly adhere to truth, and only embellish where fact and fancy are not at variance. Her eyes had been so little inquisitive, that she was almost as unacquainted with Aubrey's person then as the reader still is. To settle which point briefly, he had great pretensions to manly beauty; yet his face was not such as a poet or writer of romance would choose to paint his hero from. His features were regular, he had fine teeth, and an agreeable smile; but the cast of his countenance bore the character of meekness. It was lively enough, but it had not that eagerness which bespeaks a disposition to go in quest of giants, for the honour of slaying them. It was the index of his mind: he was not deficient in spirit, but it was not easily roused to resentment; and he soon forgave thoroughly, on the slightest reparation; but, when roused, he never gave way, and opinions investigated and embraced on principle, he would not relinquish, though he rarely was warm in supporting them. He never meant to do wrong, but was not very solicitous about what was thought of him. He felt keenly for others, and his benevolence was unbounded; but his ideas of friendship were romantic; and, according to those, he did not think it had existence on earth. As for his person, it was well formed, neither tall nor short, and, though slender, muscular and strong.

Whatever was the state of Aubrey's heart in the progress of love, there was no doubt that he was enraptured. The ladies, on their part, were not displeased: a countenance like his, mild and unassuming, portended no ill; and his musical talents delighted them. Several songs and duets were sung; and more time had passed before he thought of going than had been imagined on either side. It

will be readily supposed, that he did not leave the ladies without requesting permission to repeat his visit. "Sir," said Mrs. Melvil, "I will frankly tell "you, that I am not in the habit of receiving visitors. "Circumstances render it necessary for me and my "daughter to live reclusely; she has no protector "but myself, a poor old woman. In short, Sir, visits "—we are not used to visits. I am sure you will "pardon the frankness with which I speak."

This was said in great simplicity of heart by the mother; but the daughter's averted countenance betrayed that she feared it conveyed more than it meant. Aubrey, however, who retained a native simplicity of mind, took it in the exact sense in which it was spoken, and saw only the anxiety of a tender parent to shield a child from the shafts of slander. "I should be sorry," he replied, "to be "an intruder on your retirement; yet I cannot al- "together relinquish the hope of occasionally re- "peating to you my acknowledgments for the care "and kindness I have received." Mrs. Melvil made no reply; but both she and her daughter accompanied him across the little lawn to the gate at which he had entered, where he took leave of them.

CHAPTER III.

All that glitters not gold—The possession of the heart not to be gained by beauty without virtue and good sense.

With exhilarated spirits, a sylph-like form stationed on his eye, and seraphic notes vibrating on his ear, Aubrey, retracing the delights of the morning, having all his senses absorbed in his imagination, had proceeded to the little inn, paid the hostler, mounted

his horse, and, without once putting him into a trot, had rode a mile down the lane to where it falls in with the highway, when he was awakened from his trance by the salutation of a fellow-collegian, who, in company with a friend, had been out with the hounds, and was now returning with him, prepared for a hearty dinner. Aubrey, on hearing the young Cantab declare the keenness of his appetite, remembered that he himself had not dined, and proposed to make a trio at the first good inn on the road. This being determined on, his acquaintance introduced him to his companion, Lord Sudley; and they proceeded till they came to the Stag's Head, about five miles from Cambridge.

Hunger banished, and the bottle put on table, the conversation at first naturally turned upon the chase, and the various delightful exploits and talents of hounds, hares, and foxes; from which it as naturally descended to disquisitions on the fair sex. After much common-place talk, Lord Sudley exclaimed: "Damn me, but they are sweet creatures; and it "is a cursed pity that their unnatural education "forces them all to be hypocrites!"—"Your Lord-"ship is severe on the ladies," said the young Cantab; "some, perhaps, are not insincere."—"Our mothers "and sisters, perhaps," cried my Lord with a laugh; "eh, Dawson? What is your opinion, Mr. Aubrey? "Mind, I allow mothers and sisters."—"I beg "your Lordship," replied Aubrey smiling, "will "just make room enough to squeeze into your ex-"ception one cousin of mine, of whom my aunt was "delivered in the month of January, in a romantic "excursion among the mountains of Lapland; I'll "answer for my cousin."—"And pray," cried Mr. Dawson, "though born within the tropics, add my "grandmother, aged seventy-two; I'll answer for "my grandmother."—"Be it so," said my Lord;

" mothers, sisters, Aubrey's Lapland cousin, and " Dawson's tropic grandmother, aged seventy-two; " the two last being respectively answered for. " Yes," added he, more seriously, " it is a lament- " able state of necessary hypocrisy, to which they " are doomed by the passions of selfish men; whence " it becomes the duty of liberal men to understand " them, not as they speak, but as nature speaks for " them; and to lay it down as a rule, that they deny " in order to be urged, fly to be pursued, and resist " to be compelled."

As Lord Sudley had dropped the jocular strain with which the conversation began, and his countenance indicating that he expressed the real sentiment of his mind, Aubrey, though not disposed to check the flow of spirits to which he attributed the remarks that had been made, could not hear in earnest a sentiment so entirely the reverse of his own, without declaring the difference. " Surely " you jest, my Lord," said he.—" Not I, by St. " George," replied Lord Sudley: " look round on " all animated nature, and tell me what you see: do " you not see, that love is liberty, and nature law?" —" Except in human nature," answered Aubrey, " I see neither love nor liberty. I see animals " chained by instinct, nature bound in fate. There " is neither sense of beauty, reciprocity of senti- " ment, nor election of object. I see the reverse " of this in the race of man; discrimination of " charms, freedom of choice, and an emanation of " soul that is the soil of love. I see—"—" Damn " me, I see," cried Lord Sudley, interrupting Aubrey, " that you are either a parson, or intended for " one: but, prithee, don't preach over the bottle: " not all you have read, or will read, can ever do " away the plain proofs of instinct being a law of " human as well as of the rest of animal nature."—

"That instinct enters into the constitution of our "species is evident enough," replied Aubrey; "but "that it is not that blind, imperious instinct which "governs the brute creation, and that there is in the "breast of man a power to controul it, is equally "evident. Scipio resigning a beauty, and the elder "Brutus sacrificing his sons, are not solitary ex- "amples in the history of mankind. The Romans—" —"Curse the Romans," exclaimed his Lordship; "I "believe there is as little truth in what is called their "history, as in the history of their gods and god- "desses."—"What the opinion of the ancients were "on this matter," said Dawson, jocularly supporting Lord Sudley, "appears, by their believing that the "very divinity of Jupiter never thwarted the instincts "he had in common with men and brutes; he was a "tippler, an epicure, and the devil of a god for the "women: nay, what a strumpet was Diana herself, "the goddess of chastity!" Aubrey, who, as we have seen, was not apt to wrangle, laughed, and inclined to let the talk flow back into the channel of mirth; but Lord Sudley, the ease of whose mind depended more than that of either of the others on believing that nature dictated licentiousness, swore roundly that there was not one of the daughters of Eve who was not a libertine in her heart, and who would not show it in her actions, were it not for the vile trammels of unnatural rules.—"Rules," said Aubrey, "to which your Lordship owes your birth "and fortune."—"I thank them," replied Lord Sudley; "but is that your logic?"—"I was willing "to try an *ad hominem*, my Lord," rejoined Aubrey; "but I think the purity of the female character "wants no such appeal. Nature, not that nature "to which you seem exclusively devoted, but that "nature which peculiarly belongs to your species, "has thrown such charms on chastity and fidelity,

" rendered them the sources of such cordial delight, " constituted them the chief bonds of love, and has " besides united such collateral advantages with " them, that I am confident they are not only genuine " properties in the character of women, but the " sources of great virtues in that of men." Lord Sudley laughed. " My Lord," continued Aubrey, " they are the foundation of a character peculiar to " man; that of a father. Look round again, my " Lord, on all animated nature, and tell me, man " excepted, if you can any where find the character " of a father?"—" Ey!" ejaculated Lord Sudley. —" Were it necessary," continued Aubrey, " I " might add all the sweet ties of kindred, which " owe their existence to chastity and fidelity; but " that of a father alone is enough to prove that God " has rendered them innate in the female breast."— " Innate!" exclaimed his Lordship, recollecting himself, " why, even the proverb says, ' He is a " wise father that knows his own child.' "—" I do not " say," replied Aubrey, " that they are never to be " defaced from the breast of women; the contrary " is clear, and a licentious age gave rise to your " proverb: but their being liable to be defaced is " no proof that they are not innate; and I firmly " believe that every departure from them is owing " to the seduction of men, or the still more danger- " ous seduction of female companions, who transmit " the corruptions they receive from others, and " who, untrained to wise employment, are left to " the pernicious influence of perverted imagina- " tion."—" You will do, Sir, you will do," cried Lord Sudley. " Dammee, Dawson, your friend is " in the pulpit."—" I cannot conceive where Au- " brey has been," said Dawson; " I never before " heard him so sentimental."—" Been!" cried Au- brey; " had ye, ye infidels, but seen her! her timid

" motion, her downcast look, her simple dress, the " piety of her song, the enthusiasm of her halle- " lujah—"—" What was the colour of her eye?" cried Lord Sudley, interrupting Aubrey's rapture.— " There was indeed a brilliancy in the hazel," said Aubrey.—" Hazel-eye, long lash, auburn hair," added Lord Sudley.—" The nut-brown maid," continued Aubrey.—" As brown as you please," said his Lordship; " but, as to the other property, bate " that, I beseech you; Melvil, egad!—"

Aubrey started, his heart fluttered, and he stared at the pronouncer of a name, to the possessor of which he was ascribing every beauty, and on whom he was about to bestow gratuitously every virtue. His surprise was not observed, and he resolved to conceal his emotion. " Demure hypocrite!" continued Lord Sudley; " but her very complexion " betrays her: don't you think so?"—" You take it " for granted then, my lord," replied Aubrey, " that " I was describing the lady you allude to."—" It " must be her; I am sure it must be her," said his Lordship; " she lives up that lane, near the place " where we overtook you. Come now, don't you " know her?" Aubrey, thus pushed, would not descend to a falsehood. " It is singular," said he, " that I should have slept at her mother's cottage " about ten days ago, in consequence of an accident; " yet, till this morning, I did not even know that " such a person was in existence; and I must say, " that her appearance is completely adapted to over- " turn your Lordship's doctrines." This observation brought a hearty laugh from Lord Sudley. " Nay, " hear me, my Lord," said Aubrey warmly; " I am " extremely impressed with the obligation I received " from her mother. I think you are mistaken." He then related the circumstances of his fall, and Mrs. Melvil's hospitality; concluding with his unex-

pected call in the morning, and the prudence of their declining his visits in future, from a sense of their want of protection.

During his narrative, Lord Sudley seemed struggling to smother a laugh, which, at the word *protection*, he could restrain no longer; and, having relieved himself, exclaimed: "Exactly! protection "was exactly the hook on which they fixed the "bait of beauty for me last year. I managed, however, to feast upon the bait without swallowing "the hook. The mother is a good sort of woman, "but poor, and necessity has no law. She pretended to be ignorant through the whole of the "affair; and at length the lovely girl herself began "to talk of reputation, a hook without a barb, fit "only to catch minnows; so I was off. I advise "you, Aubrey, to take care."—"Really, my Lord," said Aubrey, "there is little danger after what I "have heard; particularly as I cannot suspect a "friend of Dawson's of traducing the fame of an "innocent woman."—"I declare," returned his Lordship, "I am sorry for it; nor should I have "mentioned the circumstance, but that it is very "well known, and came in so pat to support my "opinion. By the by, I hope you have given up "yours."—"Oh, yes, my Lord," said Aubrey with a groan; "after this, any thing; I give it up, my "Lapland Snowdrop and all."

The day now closing, the gentlemen ordered their horses; and Lord Sudley leaving the room first, Aubrey took the opportunity of asking his companion whether he knew the lady in question? "Not at all," said Mr. Dawson, "I never saw her; "though, about a twelvemonth ago, I heard several "times of Sudley's attachment. They are people "of no consequence in the world."—"Do you "know much of Lord Sudley?" said Aubrey,—

"Very little; he is of Cambridge; but, till last "year, was never long at a time in the university; "and his stay then was attributed chiefly to "his amour." Being now told that Lord Sudley was waiting, they joined him, and mounted their horses. Aubrey said little on the way, nor was the pace they rode very favourable to thought; yet the sudden revolution of his feelings absorbed externals, and his mind dwelt on the contrast of the portraits with which his imagination had that day been occupied: an amiable, timid, innocent girl, pure as a seraph, chaunting pious strains to Heaven, highly distinguished in the universal choir; then, an artful, designing wanton, using celestial means for the accomplishment of low and selfish ends. His enchantment vanished. Beauty and accomplishments may knock at the heart; but, to take possession of it, they must be supported by virtue and good sense.

Having galloped all the way, the horsemen were soon in town; where, on parting, Lord Sudley, laughing, said to Aubrey; "Remember you give "up your Lapland cousin."—"Ay, ay," replied he, "completely give her up. Ice and snow impede "not the irruptions of volcanoes; Iceland has a "Hecla, as well as Italy a Vesuvius; they burst out "from the isthmus of Darien to the streights of "Magellan; even beneath the seas, and the ocean "itself cannot quench them*."

* See a curious account of submarine volcanoes in the Abbé Ordinaire's Natural History of Volcanoes, a very ingenious work, in a small 8vo volume, published by Messrs. Cadell and Davies.

CHAPTER IV.

Esteem as necessary in love as in friendship—Effects of different mediums in mental optics—A good heart prompt to take the favourable side—Aubrey's disappointment; his sagacity, and resolution.

WRITERS of romance, when once they have enchanted their hero with a beautiful face and form, allow no possibility of a quiet retreat. They sometimes permit him to struggle against his passion; but, in making him virtuous, they make the poor fellow miserable. This was certainly not the case with Aubrey, in whose composition nature acted differently: he had been enchanted, it is true; and, at the moment of his being first surprised into a knowledge of Miss Melvil's character, as given by Lord Sudley, he felt an involuntary chagrin, which he would have experienced even at a description of hypocrisy discovered, but he betrayed no symptoms of unconquerable love; the object of his admiration proved unworthy of his esteem; and esteem, though peculiarly the basis of friendship, is no less necessary in the passion of love among rational beings. Though Aubrey was young, he had an excellent understanding, combined with the susceptibility of his heart; and it is only where the latter is unsupported by the former that those extravagant passions are heard of, which have been too frequently urged as the criterion of nature.

Having retired to his apartments, the occurrences of the day naturally occupied his thoughts. He now saw the circumstances that had charmed him in very different colours. Mrs. Melvil's pressing his stay at the cottage the night of his fall, had an urgency that betrayed design; the rejection of his visits was a mere artifice, to prepare the hint of pro-

tection; the chintz-room was a folio volume of evidence; the very look Miss Melvil had glanced at him from her expressive eyes, when he joined in her song, was a shot from the artillery of seduction; and, though he could say nothing of her dancing, it was clear that, in another respect, what Sallust had said of Sempronia might be said of her—she had more charms in music than became a virtuous woman*. Thus is it with mental as with corporeal vision; objects appear straight or crooked as they are regarded through mediums more or less pure.

After suffering his thoughts to run in this strain for some time, he concluded with classing his kind hostess and her beautiful daughter among the refined hypocrites of the times; and the impressions of the morning being counteracted and erased by those of the evening, he consigned to oblivion or indifference charms, which, had they been accompanied by virtue, had inevitably captivated his heart. Having fully composed his mind, he went to bed, slept sound, and rose next morning refreshed and easy. The sylph-like form had left its station, the seraphic notes had ceased to vibrate; and wanting not the voice of a friend to put him in mind that he had not breakfasted, he repaired to the table, where he found a letter, containing these words: "It's "awl a big ly, and if you is reely Miss Melvil's "lovier, doant beleve a wurd ov it. I will pruve it "from your ummel sarvant, Annonimus." This short, lack-learning billet, produced a wonderful alteration in Aubrey's appetite. The roll and butter forsook his eye, where the sylph-like form suddenly resumed its station. "It must be a lie,' cried he, "it must be a lie!"

"There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple."

* *Psallere, saltare elegantius quàm necesse est probæ.*

It appears that Aubrey was not less ready to feel a favourable conviction of the lady's innocence, than he had been prompt to admit her guilt. Lord Sudley's assertion had been in some degree corroborated by Dawson's report: but here was a vulgar, misspelt scrawl, with a fictitious signature, which no sooner struck his eye than it convinced his mind. This may be accounted for by the natural inclination of a good heart, such as Aubrey's, to the favourable side; and some may choose to account for it from an incipient passion which lurked in his bosom. Admitting the latter to be the case, it does not disprove that virtue is the basis of love; for it sprang from the falsehood of the report that had condemned the object: but it could not have been the case; for, had Aubrey's prompt emotions at that moment proceeded from the passion of love, they would probably have been attended with some doubt and anxiety. Be this as it may, as soon as the revolution which took place in his mind permitted him to think on the cause that produced it, he was puzzled to account for such a billet being addressed to him. Who could possibly suspect him of being Miss Melvil's lover? He had seen her but once, had never talked of her but with Lord Sudley and Mr. Dawson, and was acquainted with nobody that knew her. He could find no clue to unravel the mystery; and at last suspected that the landlady or waiter at the inn where he had dined had listened in an adjoining room; that they knew Miss Melvil; imagined him, from the turn of the conversation, to be her lover, and had taken this mode of removing the aspersion thrown by Lord Sudley on her character.

The impossibility of tracing the letter to any other source, so satisfied him that he had conjectured aright, that he resolved to ride imme-

diately to the Stag's Head, and clear up the mystery. In the mean time, he reproached himself for having so easily yielded his belief to the assertions of such a man as Lord Sudley, whose principles needed not a second interview to be ascertained. His Lordship was evidently a buck of the first magnitude, with rank and fortune to support a distorted understanding, and a large muscular frame to command personal deference. His form, though robust, was not inelegant, and he prided himself on his strength. His countenance was sanguine, yet not open; his eyes frequently rolled from side to side; and, beneath his brow, a physiognomist could easily detect treachery and suspicion lurking. This, however, was not evident to careless observers; and Aubrey, who was himself single-hearted, may be forgiven for attending to a tale corroborated by what his fellow-collegian had heard. He now resolved to repair his fault, by making it his business to sift the calumny to the bottom, and, from exposing it, to do justice to innocence. Though Aubrey was no knight-errant, as has been already observed, he was not deficient in that genuine spirit that prompts the noble-minded to undertake the cause of virtue. He was naturally unsuspicious, and his heart, though originally impetuous, had been strongly tinctured by his studies with that meekness which characterizes the pages of his profession, and which is too frequently, if not generally, thought to militate against the more splendid principles inculcated in the school of honour: but real courage is not incompatible with meekness; the only difference it shows in this mixed character is, that it is not eager to display itself, wishes for no occasion of exertion, and acts without a view to glory.

Aubrey having ordered his horse, called on Dawson, with whom he conversed for half an hour on

the subject of Lord Sudley's reported amour with Miss Melvil; but he could obtain no information beyond the hearsay of general report; and, having convinced himself that Dawson was not privy to the note he had received, determined not to inform him of it; and, taking his leave, proceeded to the inn where they had dined.

From the tendency of the note, he imagined that the writer of it would take an opportunity of accosting him; and he therefore resolved, as he went into the inn, to wait till he was spoken to. As he dismounted, he saw the waiter who had attended at their dinner cross before his horse. Aubrey fixed his eyes on him, with an encouraging smile. The man returned the smile, whisked his glass-cloth from under his arm, and conducted him to a room, into which Aubrey had no doubt he would follow him; but, hearing the door shut, he turned and found himself alone. After pausing a minute he rang the bell, and the same waiter again appeared. Finding that he had mistaken the smile, which had been returned of course, and that the man had now no meaning in his countenance, he put some questions to him, which should lead him to speak out had he any thing to impart. The waiter disclosed all that he knew on the subject, which amounted to nothing: he had sometimes seen Lord Sudley, but had never heard a word of Miss Melvil. He was clearly not Aubrey's correspondent. It was now the landlady's turn to be tried, and she, good woman, compensated in communication for her man's deficiency of information. She was a tall, lusty woman, whose waist was the largest part of her person; but, though her intemperance had completely discharged the graces from attending on her form, she had the remains of a fine face, to which she had the power of summoning a smile, that could destroy character without

the aid of her tongue. Being told by the waiter that Aubrey wished to speak with her, she entered the room with a hand in each pocket, and hardly gave him time to make any inquiry. "My good "Mrs. Lift," said he, "in the lane about four miles "farther on the road, which leads across the coun- "try to Huntingdon, there lives a Mrs. Melvil.—" This was enough; already the destroying smile advanced to her eyes and settled on her lips; already Aubrey knew all she was going to say, and would have spared her the recital; for his object was reparation, and not destruction; but he was doomed to listen to the whole tale. Having given the impetus to her tongue, it was no longer in his power to stop the movement; nor did it return to a temporary state of rest till the whole force imparted by the subject was exhausted. Except in colouring, little was added to what he had heard before; but one conviction he received the moment the landlady opened her lips, which contributed to render her lively speech very tedious—he was convinced that she was not his correspondent. She had collected, combined, and exaggerated all the reports that had circulated at the time; and so faithful was her memory, and so prompt her elocution, that, though the matter and the very parties had long ceased to be talked of, not a syllable was lost that could confirm Miss Melvil's guilt in Aubrey's mind.

Having coldly dismissed this votary of slander, he remained for some time in a state of perplexity and vexation, anxious to meet with the writer of the billet, but totally at a loss how to proceed in search of him. He sauntered about the inn, in hopes of finding his correspondent in the person of a chambermaid, who might as well have been the listener as her mistress; and even scrutinized the looks of the stable-boys. At length, despairing of success, he

ordered his horse, and returned to the university, extremely disappointed. The rest of the day hung heavily on his hands; he painted Lord Sudley in the blackest dies of villany, and was impatient to confirm his new belief of Miss Melvil's virtues.

The next morning, his breakfast-table presented him another billet on the same subject, couched in the following terms: "I could not see your honour "yesterday, being out the hole day on a bizness I "doant like at all, and which perhaps your honour "is concerned in, as I said before, if you ar the "lovier of that sweet young lady. I am at present "going again upon the same arrand, and if your "honour has time to spare to take a ride after break-"fast to the Stag's Head, where you dined that "day, you may hear it all from your hummel ser-"vant, Julius Cæsar."—"Julius Cæsar!" exclaimed Aubrey, "what the deuce has Julius Cæsar to "do with Miss Melvil's character! Ay, ay, I see "through the matter now: this is a joke of Daw-"son's." Aubrey had seen nothing the day before to give him the slightest suspicion that his fellow-collegian was playing him a trick; but, after the fruitless inquiries he had made at the very inn where he was now appointed to go, his acquaintance with Miss Melvil not being known to any person but Dawson and Lord Sudley, the latter being exempt from the possibility of suspicion, and the note alluding to the place where he had dined with them, he thought it now evidently the case: he, therefore, once more resolved to forget Miss Melvil, and with her, Lord Sudley, Anonymous, and Julius Cæsar.

CHAPTER V.

Julius Cæsar.

It is easier to resolve than to execute. Julius Cæsar was not to be got rid of; he was very importunate the whole time that Aubrey was at breakfast; every morsel of bread, every sip of tea that he swallowed was accompanied with a warning not to neglect his invitation. "Indeed," thought Aubrey, as he rose from the table, "it were better to be laughed at, in "the event of a trick, than to have to reproach one's-"self with losing an opportunity of retrieving the "reputation of an innocent, unprotected fellow-"creature." His bosom glowed with this defiance of ridicule in favour of virtue, and he hastened to sally forth to the appointment of Julius Cæsar. He rode into the inn-yard, still dubious whether as the object of laughter, or the champion of innocence and beauty.

As he entered the court, he saw a young negro man, who appeared to be a servant, mounted on a handsome hunter. He walked his horse forward to meet Aubrey, and, taking off his hat to him, accosted him in these words: "I hope, Sir, you'll not be "offended at my begging you to ride on towards "the lane that leads up to Mrs. Melvil's; I don't "wish to be seen talking with you here. I'll follow "your honour in a few minutes."—"But who are "you, my lad?"—"I live at present, Sir, with Lord "Sudley."—"Are you Julius Cæsar?" said Aubrey smiling. The negro, who saw nothing ludicrous in a name which he had absolutely received on a plantation in the West Indies, and which he had thought proper to sign to his second letter, answered in the affirmative, with due gravity. Aubrey then bade him be expeditious, and, leaving

him, returned to the road, totally at a loss to account how this man, whom he did not recollect ever to have seen, should have taken it into his head that he was Miss Melvil's lover.

He had advanced about a mile, when he was overtaken by the servant, who, to avoid the public way, begged to conduct him over some fields, with which he was well acquainted, and which would bring them out upon the road again a little farther on. Aubrey was too impatient for the promised intelligence to proceed far without it; and he was no sooner concealed by the hedges, than he eagerly began: "Well, my lad, how came you to know I "was acquainted with Miss Melvil? and what have "you to tell me about her?"—"Give me leave, "Sir," said the young man, "and I will tell you the "whole in regular order. Mr. Aubrey, I can't bear "to act the part of a scoundrel, and I won't do any "such thing. I know a servant ought not for to "betray his master's secrets; but then the keeping "of those secrets ought not for to make a servant "a villain: besides, every servant has two masters, "and, unless they are of the same mind, he can't "serve both. Massa, Lord Sudley is one big devil, "one big devil!" Aubrey's mind now required but little proof to establish Cæsar's position. "Be-"lieve me, massa Aubrey," continued he, "he is "one big devil: dat poor, dear, young lady never "did love him; and the world wicked for take "up Lord Sudley's big lie to say so much 'gainst "her." The earnestness with which he spoke concentered on his lip and ebon brow, graces that know no colour, that proceed not from the eloquence of words, that are independent of the symmetry of features; graces that emanate from virtue, and fascinate the soul. Oh, Virtue! genuine object of love! how dost thou illume the darkest skin! how dost

thou animate, exalt, and beautify whatever face and form thy radiant beams, emitted from the heart, envelope with thy sacred charms!

Aubrey, delighted with this advocate of innocence, exalted him in imagination far above the rank of the man he served: he seized the negro's hand, which was outstretched in action, correspondent to the emotion that produced his reflection on Lord Sudley and the wicked world, and shook it with a warmth that spoke his cordiality. "Yes, my good Cæsar," said he, "the "world is too prompt to entertain malevolence: "but, if Lord Sudley has been the base means of—" —"Him do it, massa, he himself, Lord Sudley," cried Cæsar, eagerly interrupting Aubrey; "and "all because Miss Melvil despise him. She a sweet "young lady: you no must mind people talk, God "will bless you both togeder."—"How comes it, "my good friend," said Aubrey, "that you take "me for Miss Melvil's lover? I never was in com- "pany with her but once in my life, and I never "saw you before to-day."—"Me hear every thing "from my Lord himself," replied Cæsar; "but 'top "make me tell you all from first—next Christmas "make two, since Lord Sudley begin to meddle long "wid Miss Melvil. He try all he can for make her "love him widout marry; but she nebber love him "from first, and she tell him so too. Presently he "think of new way to win lady's heart: he take "away her character; he write love-letters to him- "self from her, and show dem about—I see him do "it, massa Aubrey, and my blood boil."—"Pre- "cious scoundrel!" exclaimed Aubrey.—"Ay, ay, "thinks my Lord," continued Cæsar, "when her "reputation is gone, she'll not make such a fuss; "she'll be ready to fly to me of herself. He mis- "take dho, massa; for, after he succeed to make "people talk ill of her, and forsake her, she despise "him dhe more. My heart bleed for think on

" dhis young lady; so handsome, so good, so sweet-
" tempered."—" Thou art a worthy fellow," said Aubrey, " and I wonder to find thee in the service
" of such a villain."—" Massa," replied he, " a
" servant can't choose his place; but now me rather
" starve than stay with him. What you think,
" massa Aubrey? dis very night he going to carry
" her away by force."—" How!" cried Aubrey,
" with surprise and agitation; " by force! carry her
" away!"—" He come to Cambridge purpose for
" try see what her melancholy would make her
" do; but, when he find you her lover, he come
" quite mad. Dat day you dine long wid him and
" misser Dawson, me see you come in, but you no
" see me. At night, when he go to bed, he vex
" great deal, he talk to me great deal, tell me all
" about you, and den he sit down, and hatch dis
" wicked plot to run away wid her from you."—
" But to-night!" cried Aubrey, more and more agitated, " to-night!"—" Massa," replied Cæsar,
" money do every ting wid dhe Devil children.
" Lord Sudley no mind money when he want any
" ting; and there are two or three post-boy at Cam-
" bridge would go to Hell for money."—" And is
" there a chaise ordered?"—" My Lord planned
" the whole matter last night with two of the Red-
" Lion boys," said Cæsar; " dey are to travel all
" night to get to his Lordship's seat in Warwick-
" shire before people are stirring; dey send off a
" man dis morning to get de relais all ready."—
" Good Heaven!" cried Aubrey, " and I had near-
" ly resolved not to attend to your note! When the
" case was so urgent, you should have come to me
" yourself without delay."—" Massa, it necessary I
" play cunning wid Lord Sudley; he great man, I
" poor man; beside," continued Cæsar, " if you
" had not come, I would gone myself for warn Miss
" Melvil; and, radher dan any mischief come to

" her, I would go and put off the post-boys, who " know me."—" Go then immediately," said Aubrey; " no time must be lost: you need fear no in- " jury from Lord Sudley; all honest men will ap- " plaud you, all honest men will take care of you ; " fly, my worthy Cæsar, and then come to me at " Mrs. Melvil's."

Cæsar, animated by Aubrey's approbation and warmth, was going to clap spurs to his horse, when he remembered that neither Mrs. nor Miss Melvil were to be at home all day. He then developed the whole of Lord Sudley's scheme. About a mile beyond Mrs. Melvil's, up the same lane, stood a cottage, which was frequently the scene of Miss Melvil's charities; for, though her power was very confined, her benevolence was unbounded, and the deficiencies of her purse were compensated by her looks and her language. Miss Melvil, the poor Miss Melvil, a cottager herself, was the benefactress of a still humbler cottager, who lived at ease and in comparative luxury, through the pious privations of the slander-stricken maiden. Nor were the cleanliness of old Martha Wilson's tenement and apparel, and the wholesomeness of her food, the only or the best comfort she derived from her lovely neighbour. Emily Melvil, depressed by the injustice of this world, had a delight in contemplating a passenger on the verge of another; in talking of the repose, the ease, the uncontaminated bliss of a better world; and in wishing that she were as far on her way towards it as the object of her contemplation. She frequently visited Martha: and Lord Sudley having discovered that she was to leave her mother at a neighbouring farmer's, and go to the old woman's, had determined, without loss of time, to seize and force her away. Poor, feeble Martha was to be secured by means of cords, if she could not be bribed;

and was afterwards to be released, as if by accident, by Cæsar's going to the cottage.

Aubrey, now master of the whole of this project of villany, resolved to defeat it in such a manner as should completely expose the projector, and re-establish the fame of the innocent victim of his iniquity. He had the day before him to execute his plan, which he had settled in his mind while the negro was concluding his communication. In listening, he had reflected, that the more notorious the detection, the more speedy and ample would be the retribution due to the character of Miss Melvil; and he therefore resolved to suffer Lord Sudley to proceed in his villany, and lay himself open to the fullest exposure. His injunction to put off the post-chaise he recalled, communicated his intentions to Cæsar, and desired him to be very careful not to give Lord Sudley the slightest cause to suspect that he was about to be caught in his own snares. "And "now, my worthy fellow," said Aubrey, "let you "and I form a friendship for life; whatever distance "there may be in our situations or attainments, you "stand high on the scale of virtue, a better ground "for friendship than the presumed equality of sta-"tion. Come to me as soon as we have exposed "Lord Sudley, and I doubt not we shall have a "lasting affection for each other." Praise merited vibrates sweetly to the heart; the negro felt it; the value of his place was forgotten. What are coronets, what are crowns and sceptres, weighed in the scale against virtue!

Cæsar having executed his master's commission, which was to ascertain whether Mrs. and Miss Melvil had, as they proposed, set out early from the cottage, informed Aubrey that he had nothing more to do at present, but to go and acquaint Lord Sudley with the result of his inquiry; and, expressing

a reluctance to carry on the deceit necessary to complete his exposure, requested to be directed by Aubrey—" Massa," said he, " my heart turn " against looking upon somebody wid good eye, " when all de time me mean him harm." There was a refinement in this sentiment which, in spite of its want of accuracy, did honour to the pronouncer of it. Cæsar rose more and more in the esteem of his new friend, who took pains not only to show him, but to make him feel the difference between the base dissimulation employed by the wicked in their attacks on virtue, and that prudent concealment of the mind, which is often made its sword and buckler. Though Aubrey used the plainest language in making his distinctions, he did not overcome Cæsar's reluctance to looking at the same time with a good eye and an adverse design, till he made his bosom receive the heavenly glow that arose from the reflection of being an instrument in the hand of Providence, to restore the character of the virtuous Miss Melvil, by the punishment of villany. Cæsar's heart decided for his head:—among the uneducated children of genuine nature, the former is oftentimes the better judge.—" God bless you, my massa!" cried Cæsar, turning his horse's head towards Cambridge. " Stay, Cæsar," said Aubrey, " we must " leave nothing undone; we must have Mr. Daw- " son with us, as he is acquainted with Lord Sud- " ley." Saying this, he took a letter from his pocket, and, tearing off the outside, wrote these words with his pencil: " Dear Dawson, Lord Sudley " proves what I suspected him to be. I intreat you " to come to me without a moment's loss of time, " and before you see him. I shall be at the little " public-house near Mrs. Melvil's. Let nothing " prevent your coming." Having folded and directed it, he charged Cæsar to put a wafer into it at

the Stag's Head, and to deliver it himself into Mr. Dawson's hands. They then parted, Cæsar to fulfil his commission, and Aubrey to prepare for the execution of his plan. The latter, though fully convinced of Miss Melvil's innocence, felt a great inclination to judge of her sentiments from her own lips; and, as the enjoyment of this gratification would be attended with tenfold advantage to herself, he resolved to reveal nothing to her till the very moment of the villain's detection.

CHAPTER VI.

Benevolence frequently rewarded in an unexpected manner.

Aubrey's first care was to prepare Martha Wilson for the event of which her cottage was to be the scene; and he only stopped at the inn to desire that, if a gentleman came to inquire for him, he might be detained till he returned. He found the grateful old woman full of the praises of Miss Melvil; and eager to consecrate her little shed to the noble and pious purpose he communicated to her. The cottage stood on a hillock, surrounded with turf; but, though at a very little distance from the road, the situation of it was lonely. Three straggling huts, concealed by a coppice, formed all the neighbourhood; and the inhabitants of those, doomed to earn a scanty living by incessant labour, could pay but little attention to Martha; yet a day seldom passed without her receiving "a good morning," or "a "good night," from some of them. Aubrey reconnoitred the ground; and, being determined that the punishment of the villany should extend to all the agents in it, to the post-boys as well as their em-

ployer, he dispatched a big girl, whom he found in one of the huts, to call home her father and the person who lived in the other cottage. As the place where they were at work was not far off, she soon returned with them: Aubrey engaged them to be in the way before five o'clock, and enjoining Martha not to send any information of the matter to Mrs. or Miss Melvil, returned to the public-house to meet Dawson.

For the first time, it occurred to him to make some inquiry respecting the Melvils of the landlady of the little inn, and which his arrival before Dawson both suggested and gave him leisure to do. From her he learned, that Mrs. Melvil was the widow of a West Indian, who had formerly rented the estate, on part of which her cottage stands; but that dying shortly after he had taken possession of it, his affairs turned out to be in a very bad situation; on which the proprietor, Mr. Martin, resumed possession. He was extremely kind to the widow and her daughter, for whom he had enlarged the cottage where they lived, extended the garden, and gave them the premises, rent free, to live in. His family too had been particularly attentive to the unfortunate cottagers; who had felt themselves comforted by such unexpected friendship, and who, combating unavailing regret, had resigned themselves to humble content. Miss Emily, whom every body loved, used to be a great deal with Mrs. Martin and the young ladies, till last year.

This was information enough for Aubrey, who instantly resolved on making Mrs. Martin a party in the discovery of Lord Sudley's baseness; nor did he wait for the arrival of Dawson, but immediately set off on foot for Mr. Martin's mansion, which was only across two or three fields. His reception was worthy the motive of his visit. As he proceeded

in his explanation, pleasure gradually expanded itself over the benevolent countenance of Mrs. Martin, while eager attention and resentment developed themselves in the eyes of her husband. When Aubrey began his narrative, it was on a cold assent to hear what he had thought proper to request to communicate; but when, after imparting his scheme, he concluded with saying, "Will you join in con-"founding the villain, and in asserting the inno-"cence of this injured young lady?" they both warmly concurred. "Nothing could delight me "more," cried Mrs. Martin with rapture.—"I "should like to shoot the monster," exclaimed her husband, clenching his fist; "I'll carry my pistols; "I should have pleasure in shooting him, were he "an emperor."

Delighted with the sublime point of view in which they beheld Aubrey, this worthy couple testified their sense of his conduct by the warmest expressions of esteem; they regretted having acted on appearances, however strong, and they made him acquainted with what they knew of the Melvils. Melvil seemed to have had a command of money, had been very indulgent both as a husband and a father, and had spared no expense in accomplishing his daughter. Lord Sudley had obtained admission into the family soon after their coming to reside in the country; and Mr. Melvil was pleased with his attentions to Miss Melvil, who appeared rather to discourage than promote his addresses, till after the death of her father, when her conduct seemed changed, and Lord Sudley was more frequently at the cottage than was altogether approved by Mr. and Mrs. Martin. The report of Miss Melvil's indiscretion soon after became public, and with such proofs as silenced all who attempted to defend her. The consequence was inevitable; and the innocent

Melvils had for many months borne the weight of calumny in seclusion; which Aubrey had seen them contriving to relieve in some degree by their mutual affection, and by resignation to the will of Heaven.

Aubrey and his new friends having fully expressed their sentiments on the atrocity of Lord Sudley's conduct, and on the virtuous and amiable suffering of the mother and daughter, it was agreed that Aubrey and his friend should take their dinner with the family, and that the party should afterwards repair to Martha's cottage. Matters being thus settled, Aubrey left the worthy couple to go for Dawson. His bosom, as he crossed the fields, experienced that celestial glow which springs from the consciousness of active virtue, and is the summit of human enjoyment, in which man participates such delight as angels know, and receives an earnest of his title to all their joys.

Dawson joined heartily in the scheme; he accompanied Aubrey to Mr. Martin's, where an excellent dinner could not allay the impatience of the company for the hour destined to give virtue a triumph. The career of autumn had considerably shortened the days, and the fear of Miss Melvil's being at the cottage before them, hastened them from table. Mrs. Martin, pleased with such an occasion of impressing on the minds of her daughters the principle of listening with the utmost caution to report, and of not judging by appearances, had communicated to them the intelligence she had received from Aubrey, and had resolved to take them with her. They all arrived at the cottage in good time: the men whom Aubrey had sent for received their instructions; and the company were disposed of in the second room of the cottage before Miss Melvil appeared. It having been agreed that a

meeting between her and Lord Sudley should take place, Martha was directed to keep her in the first room till he arrived; and, if he came first, to submit to what he required. It happened, fortunately, that the impatience of benevolence had outstripped the impatience of vice; for this Lord, eager to effect his villany, had gorged his wine with unusual expedition; and, scarcely had the directions been given to the old woman, when the rattling of carriage-wheels proclaimed his approach. Martha was quietly left by herself, and the company took their station in the humble chamber that could but just contain them, and where every syllable uttered in the adjoining room could not fail to be heard.

They were not long in this situation when Lord Sudley entered the cottage. Martha, affecting surprise at sight of her visitor, asked what he was pleased to want? "Has not Miss Melvil informed "you?" said he; "don't you know that she has "appointed me to meet her here?"—"Good lack! "no," said the old woman; "she never told me "any such thing: but she is coming; will you please "to sit you down; you are welcome."—"I hear "that she is very good to you," said Lord Sudley; "let me have the pleasure of assisting you like-"wise." He forced a purse into her hand; and then telling her that he had forgot his handkerchief in his carriage, desired her to go for it. Persuaded that there was nothing to be feared, she obeyed him without hesitation. The chaise had driven beyond the cottage, and, from a turn in the road, stood about a hundred yards off, concealed by the hedge. She went forward, however, as directed, and was soon at the place; but, whatever it was that prevented her, she did not return; and Lord Sudley was left, as he thought, in sole possession of the cottage.

Unfortunately for the nobleman, he was so rapt by the contemplation of his triumph, that he never thought of farther reconnoitring his ground; of peeping into the little cabin, where half a dozen mortals, invisible as the immortals who looked on in the room with himself, had combined with celestial powers in the work of benevolence, which was to confound him in the imagination of his heart. Nor had he much time to congratulate himself on the certainty of his prey: fearful of being observed from a distance, he had fixed himself in a corner of the cottage away from the window, where he remained not many minutes when the unsuspecting object of his designs entered. "Martha!" cried she, as she stepped over the threshold. She looked round for Martha, and was about to pronounce her name again, when she found herself encircled by the arms of her dire enemy. The surprise almost overpowered her; she screamed, and was only prevented from sinking by the natural struggle she made to disengage herself from the hold of the monster.

Aubrey, whose eye had found a small aperture in the door at which he stood, could hardly contain himself at the sight of Miss Melvil in the ruffian's gripe; yet, anxious that the lovely girl should have the opportunity of appearing to all the advantage the situation afforded her, he remained motionless, and, with a look and sign, restrained his companions.

"What does this mean?" cried the trembling Emily; "for what purpose are you here?"—"To "teach you to be happy, Emily," replied Lord Sudley, moving his arms and seizing her by the wrists.—"That you are a villain, Sir," she replied, recovering some degree of courage, "I know."—"Poh, poh! girl, you will talk differently by and "by; but I have no time to lose; you must go with

" me."—" You are mad, Lord Sudley; unhand me " immediately."—" It is you who are mad," he answered; " I would reason with you instead of using " compulsion, but you are not sufficiently in your " senses to attend to reason." Unable to fathom his design, and terrified by the hint of compulsion, she begged him, in a milder tone, to release her hands, promising to hear what he had to say. He seated her on a chair, and, placing himself between her and the door, he addressed her thus: " If I " have been the cause of unhappiness to you, Miss " Melvil, the fault has been yours; I meant the re- " verse, and it would still give me great pleasure to " make you happy. Why will you court misery? " The world, you see, will not give you credit for " innocence: in respect to their opinion, whether " you live in Martin's cottage, or become mistress " of the best apartments of my seat, it will make no " difference; but, in the one case, you are left to " pine in solitude; in the other, every object that " can delight the senses, every refinement that can " give zest to pleasure await you. Is not the alter- " native you appear to choose a symptom of mad- " ness? It is you who are the cause both of your " own unhappiness and mine."—" Was I," replied she, " the traducer of my fame? I have no unhap- " piness but what I feel in the loss of that. Un- " merited as it is, I own I suffer perpetual pain in " the reflection. This you have brought upon me; " but cease to insult me," continued she weeping; " let me never more see you, and I will forgive you, " without expecting a reparation, which you cannot " make but by exposing yourself."—" As the opi- " nion of the world, which you prize too highly, " cannot be recovered," he rejoined, " despise it, " and turn your thoughts to a happiness independ- " ent of it."—" Don't mistake me, Sir," cried

she eagerly, " painful as the loss of friends, as the " loss of the good opinion of the world is, it is plea- " sure compared to the torture the mind must en- " dure from conscious vice."—" And think you," he said, " it is nothing to have led me on from day " to day with hope?"—" The falsehood you have " reported of me," she replied, " is less surprising " than that contained in your question. Even be- " fore I lost my father, when nothing had occurred " to prove your views dishonourable, when your " title and your fortune were pleasing to him and to " my mother, I felt no prepossession in your favour, " and I candidly told you my mind."—" Mere " words," rejoined he; " and, that they meant no- " thing, is proved by your subsequent conduct, in " alluring me after your removal to Martin's cot- " tage."—" For shame! Lord Sudley," she ex- claimed, " you cannot yourself believe what you " assert. My poor mother thought the loss of my " father a stronger motive for urging me to fix my " situation in life: she advised me not to offend you; " she it was whose solicitude for a daughter's wel- " fare invited, and, perhaps, encouraged, your vi- " sits; but will you say, that I did not repeat to you " my fixed determination never to give my hand to " any man who had not previously interested my " heart? and, when you discovered a dishonourable " purpose, did not my mother join in dismissing you " for ever from our cottage, humble as it is?"— " Zounds! Emily," cried he, " I never saw you in " such heroics before; but come, lay them aside; " consider that a life of neglect and poverty must " be your lot; accept, therefore, a settlement from " me, and name the sum yourself." Miss Melvil's heart beat violently; she forgot the unprotected state she was in; her countenance fired with indig- nation, and she called him, " Insolent villain!"—

"As you think so," said he, "you are certainly "prepared to accompany me; my chaise is wait-"ing."

During this dialogue, Aubrey, more than once, had nearly been overcome by his feelings: his heart, which had before paid the admiration due to the personal charms and accomplishments of Miss Melvil, had now completely yielded to that passion which deserves the name of love. Every sentence she uttered, not only evinced her innocence, but discovered a virtue with which angels might be enamoured. When he saw her tears flow, and heard her proffered forgiveness if the villain would cease insulting her, he raised his hand to the latchet of the door. At the mention of the settlement, Mr. Martin observing his emotion, caught his arm, or he would have burst out to secure her from any further insult. The company had expressed their joy in silent looks; but, though perfectly convinced of Miss Melvil's merit, Mr. Martin thought it right to suffer her slanderer to proceed to the attempt of carrying her off by force; and, as he seized Aubrey, he shook his head, to deter him from interposing too soon. Lord Sudley, in addressing his last sentence to Miss Melvil, had taken a whistle from his pocket, and going to the door, gave the signal settled for one of the postboys to come to his assistance. Aubrey could be restrained no longer; he opened the chamber door and rushed into the other room, followed by all the company. It is more easy to conceive than to express the various emotions and passions that displayed themselves on this occasion. In Miss Melvil, the struggle between terror and resentment was at its height, when joy and honest shame rushed suddenly into her bosom, contending for the possession of it. Admiration and delight sparkled in the eyes of Mrs. Martin and her

daughters. Rage, mingled with an arch gratification, twisted the lips of Mr. Martin, and directed his eye to the exciting object, on whom he pointed one of his pistols. Dawson's pleasure was seen in his smile. Love and the conscious delight springing from the part he had acted filled the breast of Aubrey; while that of the ruffian, as he turned round on the unexpected group, was thrown into a tempest by the sudden encounter of passions, more furious than the warring elements that spread desolation in tropic climes; disappointment, shame, dismay, rage, revenge, at once assailed it; the blood forsook his cheeks, his pale lips quivered, and he darted a ghastly look around the room. "Dear Emily!" said Mrs. Martin, as she pressed the blushing sufferer to her bosom, "is it possible to forgive "such injustice as we have been guilty of?"— "Pretty hypocrites!" bellowed the monster, before Miss Melvil could answer, "a curse upon you all!" —"Pray, my Lord," said Aubrey, "except my "Lapland cousin."

Finding himself completely defeated, and that his detection was so full, that not a shadow of doubt remained of his villainy, Lord Sudley again cursed his detectors, and left the cottage. Mr. Martin was for securing him; but the rest of the party joined in persuading him that it was better to let him escape; no adequate punishment being provided by the law for his offence, and his infamy being fully established. This was scarcely determined, when a tumultuous noise was heard, and presently after, the cries of men. Aubrey, well knowing the cause of them, soon removed the alarm that began to rise among his friends, by assuring them that there was no occasion to be alarmed; and, requesting the ladies to remain in the cottage, he went with Mr. Martin and Dawson to the spot whence the noise

proceeded. Just as they turned round the hedge, which screened the post-chaise, they perceived Lord Sudley brush through the opposite hedge, and run as fast as he could over the field; on which Mr. Martin, in the spirit of a sportsman, gave the view hollow. On coming up to the chaise, they saw the post-boys tied behind it, their backs bare, and receiving their merited castigation, surrounded by a band of country people, men, women, and children, who had been informed of the nature of their offence by the cottagers employed by Aubrey, and whose hostile appearance had put the nobleman to flight. On the post-boys confessing, with contrition, that they had been bribed to assist in the villany, the gentlemen interposed, and they were released.

Aubrey having rewarded the men whom he had employed; and Mr. Martin and Dawson having distributed some silver among the by-standers, to go and drink Miss Melvil's health, they returned to the ladies. During their absence, Mrs. Martin had not only made every kind and soothing reflection, to atone for her desertion of Miss Melvil, but had expatiated with ardour on the noble conduct of Aubrey, by which not only every false impression had been removed, but the virtues of her young friend's mind brought to view with additional lustre and honour. It is no wonder, then, that when Miss Melvil saw him return with his friends her eyes should be fixed on him, or that they should convey intelligence of the gratitude she felt at her heart. The obligation he had conferred was, however, of too delicate a nature to admit of profuse acknowledgments: to her look she added an expressive bow, and wiped away the tear about to fall upon her cheek. Mrs. Martin observing her distress, proposed to leave the cottage. As they went out, they

met at the door the good old Martha, who had at first been forcibly detained by the post-boys, and had afterwards stayed with the other country people, to see summary justice performed upon their backs. They left her, with many kind expressions, in possession of her cottage; and, as they proceeded to conduct Miss Melvil to her mother, they saw the post-chaise returning empty down the lane towards Cambridge. "Oh, Sir," cried the grateful girl, looking first at the chaise and four, and then at Aubrey, "how little did my mother foresee that her "hospitality to a stranger would be rewarded with "such a blessing!"

CHAPTER VII.

A bone for the critics, being a crowded chapter, out of all manner of rule.

The incidents recorded in the preceding chapters form too interesting a part of the history of Aubrey and his Emily, to be detailed less circumstantially; but it is now time to bring the reader to that period of it for which he was prepared in the outset; and he shall be hurried over the intermediate space with a rapidity necessary for the progress, and dangerous only to his conductor, who, having fallen into a path that leads to the edge of a precipice, is fain to shut his eyes and push over the narrow way, lest he grow dizzy by consideration, and lose his equilibrium.

The triumph of Miss Melvil, her mother's gratitude, the pleasure of benevolence, and the mortification of envy and slander, will be easily conceived. The courtship of Aubrey was attended with some difficulties, and his marriage hastened by an event of a melancholy nature. The heart which was

steeled against the Herculean, though not ungraceful exterior of Lord Sudley, soon yielded to the unassuming virtues, mild manners, and expressive countenance of one who was also beheld in the character of a guardian angel; and mutual vows of lasting affection were pledged between the lovers, before they had reflected on the possibility of an obstacle to their union.

Aubrey, it will be remembered, was entirely dependent upon his uncle, the head of his house, who proudly looked back upon a long line of ancestors, both male and female, whose dignity centered in him, and which, when he ceased to support it, was to be transmitted to posterity by his nephew. Nursed in a cradle like his, it was natural for him to imbibe with his very milk the passion that grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, a desire that the blood of Aubrey should flow with undiminished purity from generation to generation, to the end of time. The obstacle which arose from this passion to the accomplishment of the happiness of the lovers was not to be overcome by entreaty, or by reasoning. Too well convinced of this, Aubrey directed his entreaties and reasoning to a less hopeless quarter, to his Emily and her mother. The latter at first urged some strong objections: his inability, without the assistance of his uncle, to support the object of his love; her own scanty resource, dependent on her life; and the disgrace of a clandestine marriage. To the two first, Aubrey answered, by persuading her that, however angry his uncle might be, he never would suffer the heir of the Aubrey family to appear before the world in distressed circumstances; and he endeavoured to obviate the last, by proposing that Mr. Martin should be requested to give his Emily to him at church, though he thought it would be prudent to keep the marriage

from the knowledge of his uncle as long as possible. This, however, was precisely the disgrace to which her delicacy was repugnant: the idea of her child entering into a family too proud to receive her was painful to Mrs. Melvil, who, perhaps, would have endeavoured to combat Aubrey's passion, had she not been induced by a secret motive, too powerful to be resisted, to befriend his wishes.

Before she lost her husband, her health had begun to decline; and, since that, she had felt her constitution giving way so sensibly, that the thought of what was to become of her Emily had for some months silently embittered her existence, and contributed to hasten the decay of her frame. Aubrey was exactly the man whom she would have chosen to entrust with her treasure, and she was seriously convinced that he argued rightly respecting his uncle. Determined by these considerations, she yielded to his persuasion. The licence was procured, and Aubrey received Miss Melvil's hand from Mr. Martin, in the village church, with sufficient privacy to prevent the intelligence of their marriage being conveyed to the public papers. It had been agreed, that they should receive no company, and that Aubrey should live at the cottage without giving up his apartments at Cambridge, till he had reconciled his uncle to the step he had taken. Cæsar, the worthy Cæsar, on leaving Lord Sudley, had become the faithful attendant of Aubrey, who had made his merit known, and who delighted to represent him as the chief spring in the operations against his Lordship. As for that nobleman, who had fled from the cottage across the fields, for fear of participating the dues administered to his low accomplices by the hands of the peasants, so completely deprived had he been of every means of exculpation or extenuation, and so notorious was his disgrace,

that he thought his best plan was to absent himself for some time from the country; and he accordingly went abroad.

While Aubrey was enjoying his happiness, and meditating on the best means of deprecating the wrath of his uncle, this gentleman was informed of what had taken place, by the officiousness of one of his cousins, for whom he had stood godfather, and who was christened after him. This young man had heard of the marriage accidentally, from a person who, coming from the neighbourhood where the ceremony had been performed, and combining the sounds of the name, had inquired if the gentlemen were related. The old man, appalled at the bare mention of it, would not credit the fact: he posted to Cambridge to inquire into the truth, and soon ascertained it at Aubrey's apartments, where the servant who took care of them, having received no injunction of secrecy, was very free in his communication. Overcome by vexation and rage, Aubrey's uncle gave vent to imprecations that terrified the servant; and he discovered himself by desiring him to tell the fellow that he was a beggar, and should remain one, for he would disinherit him the moment he got home.

Aubrey was immediately informed of what had passed, and hastened after his uncle. In vain; the doors of Aubrey-hall were shut against him, and he was informed that the owner of it was engaged with his lawyer. Dismayed at this information, he went to Chelmsford, the town near which the family mansion was situated, and waited an opportunity of conversing with his uncle's lawyer, whose name was Lamb, a young man, who had been taken into partnership by the family conveyancer, and had succeeded to his business. From him he learned that his uncle had given instructions for a new will, by

which he would be entirely disinherited; that Arthur, the godson of the old man, was named as his heir, and under the severest restrictions not to use any part of his fortune in providing for his disinherited nephew or his children. Mr. Lamb convinced Aubrey, that all opposition at present to the torrent of his uncle's rage would be fruitless, and he advised him to give it time to spend its fury before he attempted to recover his favour. This advice he followed, and returned with the painful tidings to the cottage in Cambridgeshire, where the smiles of his Emily diverted his attention from the gloomy prospect before him. Fortunately he had received his half-yearly allowance the week before his uncle's unexpected appearance at his apartments, which, with the hope that his anger would subside before the next period of payment, tranquillized his spirit, naturally even, and not easily disturbed.

Mrs. Melvil, in whose mind the attractions of the present moment were not so powerful as to suppress all anxiety for the future, endeavoured, and for some time successfully, to conceal the chagrin she felt; but this new ally joining the enemies that had already laid siege to her life, it was not long before the effects of their united operations gradually became visible. She lived, however, to become a grandmother, and to see her children restored to prosperity by her advice. When she found Emily advanced in her pregnancy, she hoped the issue of it would be a son; and she advised Aubrey to wait for that occasion to make his essay on his uncle's heart. Her prayer was heard; Emily presented her husband with a boy, destined to restore him to the favour of which his mother had been the means of depriving him. Aubrey wrote a mild and persuasive letter to his uncle, in which, instead of dwelling, as is usual, on the charms he had found irresistible, he

leaned to the prejudices of the family; regretted that the head of it might hereafter, if left poor, be looked upon with contempt by the haughty and supercilious; entreated to be allowed to give the name of Arthur to the child, who would one day have the honour of representing the house; and declared, that he should not think himself warranted to do so, unless his uncle consented to answer for him at his baptism.

This was a powerful appeal to the passions of the man to whom it was addressed. Some months had elapsed since he had executed the will by which he had disinherited his nephew, and his rage had subsided, not only through the influence of time, but from want of the fuel which would have been supplied by premature solicitation. The old man not only wondered that he had received no application from his nephew, but had even begun to wish for one; and, when it did come, it was in a form as irresistible to him as Miss Melvil's charms had been to Aubrey. He was easily convinced that to separate the fortune and there presentative, was to entail disgrace upon the house; and the very day on which he received the letter, he sent for Mr. Lamb, directed him to alter his will, and to have it ready for him to execute on his return from Cambridgeshire, whither he resolved to go instantly: and where the charms of his niece, the health of her beautiful boy, the interest excited by the gentle struggle in Mrs. Melvil's countenance between joy and fate, and the ardour of his nephew's embrace, completed the reconciliation. He would immediately have removed the whole party to Aubrey-hall, had it been practicable; but Mrs. Melvil, in a private conversation, gave him such unanswerable reasons against her removal, that he consented, with tears in his eyes, to leave them in the cottage, till

quitting it became necessary to dissipate the sorrow of her Emily. After spending three days in Cambridgeshire, where his joy was not unmixed with melancholy, he returned home to execute his will.

Poor Emily!—Deceived by the placid resignation that enlivened the countenance of her beloved mother, the discovery of her danger did not precede her loss more than a week. Perceiving that it could be no longer concealed from her, Mrs. Melvil, who had been reflecting how she might best fortify her daughter's mind, took her by the hand, and thus addressed her: "How delightful, my dear Emily, has "nature rendered the office of a mother, in suck-"ling her infant! This you have often heard me "say, and you now experience the truth of the as-"sertion. How unaccountable is the conduct of "those mothers who transfer this office to other "persons! There can be but one excuse for them, "and that is, bad health: all pleasure must be re-"linquished of which misery is to be the conse-"quence. Your boy, my love, depends upon you "for his comfort, for his health. Were you to suf-"fer violent emotions to agitate your bosom, not "only his health, but his life would be endangered." Mrs. Aubrey's eyes were fixed upon her mother's face: she understood her but too well. Had not only the child's life, but her own, depended on her repressing her emotions, both must have been sacrificed: she answered her mother with a shower of tears. "You understand me, Emily; and I will "speak plainly to you," resumed Mrs. Melvil. "It "is the will of God that we should part: I have "been aware of it for some time past; but let us "part with a confidence that I shall be happy where "I am going, and that you will be happy in your "progress here: let us part with a firm belief that "we shall meet again, and the idea of separation

" will be less painful. I trust, on my part, that I " have made my peace with Heaven. As for you, " my love, I leave you under the care of a worthy " man, in affluence ; and I doubt not that your con- " duct in this life will secure our reunion in another. " Think of me often, but without pain, without " grief: and consider your child, I beseech you. " Grief is a strong passion ; and be assured he will " suffer for it, if you allow it to prey upon your " mind."

Mrs. Aubrey wiped away her tears, and kissed her mother's hand; but attempted not to speak. Feel she must, and did keenly; yet the judicious opposition of sentiment assisted reason in checking a sensibility fraught with such danger to the little cherub, whose innocent, speechless lips, kept her constantly in mind of his dependence on her wisdom. Still the trial was very severe; and, when her mother's spirit took its flight to one of the many mansions of the celestial abodes, it was not till her admonition was repeated by Mrs. Martin, and enforced by Aubrey, that the violence of filial sorrow yielded to maternal love.

CHAPTER VIII.

The tediousness of a life of ease—Some indication of the cause being removed.

TIME, change of scene, and new habits, not only reconciled the mind of Emily to the loss of Mrs. Melvil, but insensibly wrought in it a variation of character, of which she was unconscious, and which Aubrey was too fond of her to perceive ; indeed, it consisted in an assimilation to his own, and there-

fore not likely to be detected, or to be disapproved, if observed. With a good understanding, considerable learning, and an excellent heart, Aubrey, as has been remarked, was in most respects of a passive disposition. He followed the manners of the world, without inquiring into them; and, where there was nothing criminal, custom absolved absurdity. His profession, which he had ceased to consider as one almost as soon as he had entered into it, though treated by him with the respect due to it, was not the object of much concern. Heir to an immense fortune, and meanwhile enjoying a large income, he mixed with society in the common way, substituting the urbanities of life for friendship, mingling gay parties with domestic enjoyments, and frequenting public amusements to see and be seen. Mrs. Aubrey was naturally biassed into a conformity of disposition: misfortune, at an early period of life, had led her to books, to reflection, to the wise amusements of solitude; affluence, an easy mind, and the example of her husband, had made her, in some degree, a woman of the world. She gave routs, listened to flattery, and, contenting her mind with the consciousness of her love and fidelity, suffered herself to be carried with her husband gently down the stream of fashionable life. Their eldest son, who was born in the Cambridgeshire cottage, was christened at Aubrey-hall; his grand-uncle stood for him, and gave him the name, the venerated name, of ARTHUR. The same baptismal bowl of massive plate had supplied pure water to secure the important name in another of her boys, who, to prevent a recurrence of his father's case, was christened Arthur-William. Between the boys, Mrs. Aubrey had given birth to two girls, the elder of whom was named Emily, after herself, to please her husband; and the younger, Arthurina, to please old Aubrey,

who would have had it Arthur, had not his nephew convinced him that it would ill-suit with the feminine term of respect.

Aubrey, prepossessed in favour of a private education, engaged tutors to instruct his son at home. Mrs. Aubrey attended to the girls herself, with the assistance of a sensible elderly woman, who had lived with Aubrey's mother. After some years, the common round of life became tiresome, the perpetual recurrence of the same scenes rendered them insipid, and the Aubreys began to find that there was something wanting to give relish to enjoyment; they did not precisely know what it was; and they determined to go abroad with all their children, with the double design of pleasure and improvement. At Chantilly, Aubrey received intelligence of his uncle's death; and with it the lawyer's hint that the will he had made in anger was not revoked. Leaving his Emily to take care of her young group, and to travel homeward at leisure, he set out, attended by Cæsar, and made the best of his way to England: the letter which he sent to her was written in the vessel crossing the channel; nor did he take rest any where but in the packet till he reached Aubrey-hall.

On his arrival, finding that seals had been regularly placed on all his uncle's drawers, he immediately sent for his lawyer, who, being in expectation of Aubrey's return, had taken care to be in the way, and did not long make him wait. His countenance was a mixture of welcome and apprehension, in which the latter was predominant. "Your letter, "Mr. Lamb, has given me great uneasiness," said Aubrey; "yet it is so improbable my uncle should "have postponed so material an act, that I cannot "think there is just ground for the apprehension "you expressed."—"For your sake, sir," replied the lawyer, "I hope my apprehension may prove

" but a mark of the interest I take in your welfare, " and in the justice of the case. I am not only con- " cerned for the legal title, which vests in you; but " all your uncle's conversations, and his conduct, " since his visit to Mrs. Aubrey in Cambridgeshire, " are undeniable testimonies of his affection, and of " his intentions towards you and your family."— " In what then," cried Aubrey, " consists the " doubt?"—" That he has never," replied Lamb, " to my knowledge, executed the will drawn up for " him by me according to his instructions, and in " which all his estates were left to you for and during " the term of your natural life, without impeach- " ment of or for any manner of waste, then to trus- " tees to preserve contingent remainders, remainder " to the first and other sons of your marriage in tail, " remainder to your daughters as tenants in common " in tail, with terms for jointering Mrs. Aubrey, and " raising portions for your younger children. As I " was present at the executing of the former wills, " and as your uncle generally applied to me on " most of his law concerns, there is an unaccount- " able—I more than once hinted it to him;—how- " ever, let us hope, sir;—the suddenness of his death " prevented my speaking to him upon it. I thought " it my duty, the moment I was informed of it, to " affix seals to the rooms where his papers were " kept, and to write immediately to you."

Aubrey said that the doubt could not be too soon cleared; and, without loss of time, proceeded to the library, attended by Mr. Lamb, to inspect the drawers where his uncle kept his papers. The tin-case which contained the will soon struck the active eye of the lawyer, and he pointed it out to Aubrey, who raised it from the place where it lay with a trepidation he had never felt before. Scarcely able to take off the top of the case, he put it into the

hands of Lamb, who, as he drew out the contents, gave a deep groan, which seemed to come from the bottom of his heart. "It is as I feared," he exclaimed, stamping his foot on the ground, and throwing the will open upon the table. Aubrey's heart sunk within him; the blood forsook his face. "Oh, "the fatal consequences of negligence!" continued the lawyer: "it is the first of crimes! it is the "source of all others! What is it to you that he "loved you, that he supplied you; when his sloth, "his negligence, has turned his intended blessings "into curses! Better would it have been to have "left you poor at first, than thus to throw you from "the height to which he raised you."—"I will not "believe it," cried Aubrey, his countenance resuming its natural serenity; "I cannot believe it. Since "this will is not executed, there must be another, "and we shall find it." Lamb shook his head, and shrugged his shoulders. Though credulity is seldom a lawyer's vice, his belief in the present instance was prompter than Aubrey's, and he declared himself certain that no other would be found. He patiently, however, attended in making a thorough search, which terminated in the confirmation of his opinion. "Would to Heaven!" cried Lamb, with great emotion, "that I had thrown the other into "the fire before him; it ought to have been done; "it was intended: I'll go home this instant, and do "it!"—"No," said Aubrey, "I would rather "starve."—"The fault, the crime, was partly mine," said Lamb, with increasing agitation; "I cannot "bear the thought. Were that instrument dis-"posed of, you would still be heir-at-law."—"Where "is it, say you?"—"Just where it was executed; "in my office, where it has lain ever since, with "some of the Aubrey-estate papers."—"That's "odd," said Aubrey thoughtfully.—"Sir!" cried

Lamb.—"Very odd," continued Aubrey; "solicit-
"ous as he was about the dignity of his family, that
"he should have been so negligent."—"Very odd,
"indeed!" replied Lamb, who perceived that Au-
brey meant no reflection on his integrity: "could
"he for a moment appear again," continued the
lawyer, "would he not order the destruction of the
"neglected, the forgotten, fatal instrument left in
"my possession?" Aubrey was absorbed in thought;
he had thrown himself into the chair that stood be-
fore his uncle's desk. "The crime, in my opinion,"
proceeded Lamb, "would be to suffer it to exist;
"it must not—it shall not be; you are, you shall be
"the heir of Aubrey!" Aubrey, resting his head
upon his hand, neither heard the speech, nor saw
the violent emotion of the lawyer, as he left the
room.

Imagination, whose magic power commands the unbounded fields of pleasure and of pain, had transported Aubrey to his Emily and her little group: for them he felt, and he felt in proportion to his love. He traced all the possible results of his reverse of fortune, in which the objects so dear to his heart were involved; and, while he dwelled with anxiety on the privations they must suffer, the dream he dreamt the first night he slept in Mrs. Melvil's cottage rushed upon his mind; he recollected the airy incidents minutely, he found them substantiated in the events of his life, and now the hand of the gigantic monster was turned.

He had sat more than an hour insensible of all external objects, painting the past, and pondering on the future, when he was roused from his reverie by the return of Mr. Lamb, who entered the library with a glowing, agitated countenance. Approaching Aubrey with a hasty step; "Mr. Aubrey," said he, "we are betrayed."—"Betrayed! in what?" asked

Aubrey.—"Providence has saved me in time from "a rash act, which must have exposed me to the "most imminent danger."—"I am at a loss," replied Aubrey, "to understand you."—"When I left "you," resumed the lawyer, "in a kind of frenzy, "excited by my love of justice, to destroy, as you "know—what do I say?—I was surely mad—I "should have committed a deed for which I might "have been hanged, had I not, on going into my "house, been brought to my senses by the sight of "your relative, Mr. Arthur Aubrey. Sir, one of my "clerks was articled to me through his means some "years ago—Sir, he has thought it a duty of grati-"tude to set Mr. Arthur on inquiring—Sir, I found "him in my house—what could I do, Sir?"—"My "good Mr. Lamb," said Aubrey, "your emotion "manifests the worthiness of your heart; but com-"pose yourself; you have no doubt done what you "ought to have done. I shall leave my relation to "the enjoyment of his good fortune, and endeavour "to find some means of repairing my loss. I must "be gone; I already feel myself a trespasser here." He rose.—"You have a right, Sir," said the lawyer, "to be present at the reading of the will: you have "no objection, I think, to see Mr. Arthur Aubrey, "the devisee—Will you go home and dine with "me?"—"As to hearing the will read," replied "Aubrey, "I relinquish so mortifying a right, and "will depend upon you for procuring me a copy of "it. A meeting with Mr. Arthur Aubrey, at pre-"sent, could not be pleasing to either of us. We "have never been very intimate; and, as he may "not think this the properest time for the com-"mencement of a friendship, I shall hasten to Lon-"don."—Mr. Lamb repeated his sorrow; and Au-brey again praised the goodness of his heart. "Your "love of justice," said he, shaking hands with him

at the door of Aubrey-hall, "is the more honourable "to you, as it is so free from all interested motives; "the possessor of this estate, be he who he will, must "of course be your friend. As for me, I shall here- "after have to consult you occasionally; and, for the "present, I entrust to your care the things that be- "long to me at Aubrey-hall." He again pressed his hand warmly; and stepping into his chaise, followed by his faithful Cæsar, was soon out of sight of the mansion.

CHAPTER IX.

The friendship that anticipates solicitation is of a divine nature.

However placid by nature and habit the temper of Aubrey, it must be allowed that the reverse of fortune, which he now experienced, was a test sufficient to ruffle it. All the way to town his mind brooded over his misfortune; he seldom opened his lips, and, when he did speak, it was in short and broken sentences. Cæsar, with whom he was accustomed to converse with familiarity, perceived the change; he had never before seen his master in such a state of mind, and was naturally induced by the awe it excited to preserve an unusual restraint. He was silent till they were approaching town, when, no longer able to endure the anxiety raised in his breast by Aubrey's perturbation, he looked at him affectionately, and, in a tone of tenderness, said: "My dear "master! what ail you? if you have not give over "loving Cæsar, don't make him stranger to what "pain you."

Aubrey, roused from his trance, opened his soul to the faithful negro, and made him acquainted with

the extent of his misfortune. One of the chief benefits of friendship is the means it affords of disburdening the soul; and this Aubrey now felt. As he imparted the trouble which oppressed his heart, Cæsar participated the weight of his feelings: his painful surprise, his affectionate ejaculations, his tears, were so many magic mediums of relief to the bosom of his master, who, thus liberated from the gloomy thraldom of imagination, began to look on the side of his destiny which still presented a brightness; to indulge in visions of domestic happiness, pruned of the encumbering branches of tedious pleasures; and to form hopes and schemes for himself and his children. "Cheer up, Cæsar," said Aubrey, "cheer up; we shall do well—I have friends, I shall "obtain preferment in the church—we shall still "have more than enough, my good fellow, we shall "still have more than enough."

Having returned consolation to Cæsar for that which he had received of him, he relapsed into silence, and bent his thoughts on images of a more agreeable nature than those from which he had been awakened by the affectionate anxiety of his faithful attendant. Though he had romantic notions of friendship, such as he believed had never been realized on earth, he yet thought himself sufficiently fortunate in those connexions which assume the name, and he ran over several in his mind who had both ability and inclination to promote his interest in life, and on whose kind offices he could rest the welfare of his family. By the beneficence of his uncle, he had always had a considerable sum lodged in his own name at his banker's; and, at this time, it amounted to at least a thousand pounds. With Mrs. Aubrey he had left sufficient to defray the expences of her journey from Chantilly to England; and a mind like hers, he was certain, would be con-

tent with the preferment he expected, even if it were to amount to no more than a thousand a year. Such were the visions that occupied the imagination of Aubrey, when the chaise stopped at the hotel to which the post-boy had been ordered to drive.

Scarcely had he recovered from the fatigue of a journey uncommonly rapid, when he received a letter from Mrs. Aubrey, informing him that she was at Calais, and intended to cross the channel next day; on which he determined to postpone visiting his friends till he had collected his beloved group around him in the metropolis. On going abroad he had given up his own house, disposed of his furniture, and sent such things as he valued to Aubrey-hall; he therefore found himself under the necessity of taking a ready-furnished house for the reception of his family; nor was he so schooled by the first attack of adversity as to weigh the importance of streets in the scales of prudence. He knew it was necessary to be where his friends would not be ashamed to visit him; and he took a house by the month in Albemarle street. This done, he hastened to Dover, to meet and accompany the dearest objects of his affection.

The confirmation of their misfortune was at first severely felt by Mrs. Aubrey. A series of years spent in affluence, and the future prospects in which she had indulged her imagination for her children, were not suited to fortify her mind against so unexpected a calamity, which her apprehensions had throughout her journey painted in the most gloomy colours; in such as Aubrey had imagined, till the interruption of Cæsar turned his thoughts into a more pleasing channel. He endeavoured now to console her with the reflections which had consoled himself. Supported by his affection, and the sight of the delightful caresses he bestowed on his child-

ren, she yielded her heart to the blessings of the present hour, forgot the evils of fancy, and was happy.

On their arrival in town, Aubrey called on several of his friends. It was soon generally known that the family were returned, and cards and visits of inquiry poured in upon them. The very first card that Aubrey took up was the Earl of Aynsford's, a nobleman of princely fortune and very extensive patronage. He had several rich livings in his gift, and of one of them the incumbent was old and infirm. Lord Aynsford's card brought this living into Aubrey's mind, and he resolved to secure it by an immediate application. As the Earl's doors were always open to him, the matter was soon decided. He was received by his Lordship with a cordial shake of the hand, and many friendly inquiries. For the first time in his life he experienced the pain of inequality of situation. More accustomed to grant than to ask favours, rank and fortune made little difference in his feelings; but, when he was about to open his mouth to solicit the very means of existence, an unusual sensation spread through his bosom, which, had it remained, would have prevented him from speaking on the express business of his visit. It soon, however, passed away; and, with his usual ease, he introduced the subject, by inquiring if Lord Aynsford had heard lately of the old incumbent of Mariton. "I had a letter only the day before yes-"terday," said the Earl, "in which he was mention-"ed as being in a very declining state, and going "fast out of this world. The letter is from an ap-"plicant, whom I presented some years ago to a "living worth three hundred a year, for some services "he had rendered in my son Frederic's return to the "lower house; and the fellow has the impudence "to fix himself upon me for life: I should not be at

" all surprised to find that he considers Mariton as " a step to a bishopric. It is not less than twelve " hundred a year; it is a morsel fit for a friend. You " had better take it, Aubrey; it may lead to the " bench: I think the lawn would become you."

This appeared to Aubrey to be the work of Providence: what he wanted was thrown upon him even before he sought it. He smiled, and asked his Lordship if he had not fixed in his mind the successor to the present incumbent? " It is a rule with me, in " these cases," said Lord Aynsford, " to say I have " given a promise, in order to avoid being teased till " the event takes place; but I generally keep the " command of patronage as long as I can in my own " hands."—" How fortunate am I, my Lord!" cried Aubrey; " I came to consult you on this very point. " I have but too much neglected my profession, and " am happy in the opportunity your friendship affords " me of returning to it. I will accept of Mariton " with gratitude."—" Talk not of gratitude," replied the Earl, " it is I that am obliged: your acceptance " of it is adding strength and weight to my con- " nexions. I might look round all England, and " not find another man of so large a fortune in orders. " We must get you a mitre, Aubrey!"—" To a " mitre," replied Aubrey, " I shall have no ob- " jection: but, alas! my Lord, you are mistaken as " to my fortune."—" Why, your uncle," said the Earl, " was not an extravagant man; and you cannot " have injured it, as you have lived." Here Aubrey communicated his misfortune to Lord Aynsford, and concluded with congratulating himself on the possession of such a friend. As he spoke, he observed in his Lordship's countenance the concern his communication excited, which indeed was so great that, though unused to sudden depression, he could scarcely articulate his sorrow. Aubrey, whose ha-

som was glowing at the mark he had received of his Lordship's friendship, assured him that domestic happiness could supply, both to him and Mrs. Aubrey, the diminution of fortune; and that he considered twelve hundred a year as adequate to every rational desire. The Earl paid him a compliment on his philosophy, said he should be happy to serve him, and advised him by all means to keep a mitre in view. After some other less interesting conversation, the friends parted, warmly shaking hands; and Aubrey flew to communicate his good fortune to his Emily, who observed, that the friendship which anticipates solicitation is of a divine nature.

CHAPTER X.

Aubrey receives a copy of his uncle's will, and resolves to be magnanimous—A peep into his nursery.

Aubrey also was of opinion, that the delicate anticipation of the wants of others exalted the nature of man, and that it was a quality of friendship, but not peculiar to it; it was a property of the benevolent principle. He called his connexion with Lord Aynsford friendship, from the usual habits of speech, that meant only a disposition to mutual kindness, without including that ardour, affection, devotion of mind, which he attributed to the friendship he had read of, which he had never seen in real life, and which he conceived to be a kind of marriage, that, independent of sex, produced a delightful intimacy, and perfect correspondence; a consummate attachment, that not only mutually commanded the fortune, but the life of the friends. It was such romantic views as this which Aubrey had early taken

not only of friendship, but of the virtues, and which, finding in the world none of them realized, had given to his mind that easy cast which led him to be content with the general current of common joys. His friendship with Lord Aynsford was of this nature. In exchanged situations, he would have done for the Earl what the Earl had offered to do for him.

Aubrey having his mind in a great measure relieved as to the fate of his family, continued to see his friends; and, in the mean time, his uncle's will was established, and a copy of it forwarded to him by Mr. Lamb, accompanied by a letter, in which, after requesting his instructions relative to his effects left at Aubrey-hall, he said, that he was desired by Mr. Arthur Aubrey to express his regret at the very strict manner in which the will was worded in respect to his relative, as it deprived him of the power of following his inclination, which would have led him to render every service to an amiable family, so unexpectedly deprived of its prospects. The receipt of this packet gave a fresh wound to the heart of Aubrey; but he resolved to defy the malice of fortune, and to support the spirits of his family by a noble example of philosophy. He had no doubt of the severity of the will, and, being unwilling to put his fortitude to unavailing tests, he locked it up, to be perused at a future period on some leisure day, at his rectory of Mariton. He wrote to Mr. Lamb, to send his things (which had all been packed up on his resolution to go abroad, and conveyed to his uncle's house, where they had remained in the state they arrived), to a warehouse he mentioned in town. He had some valuable paintings; and there was one article on which both he and Mrs. Aubrey set a great value, which had often sublimed their souls to celestial raptures, and delighted the visitors of Aubrey-hall. This was a fine-toned organ, built pur-

posely for Mrs. Aubrey, and presented to her by her husband's uncle, soon after the christening of her eldest boy. It had ever since stood in the great saloon in the family mansion. Aubrey now reckoned much upon it, as a resource of felicity to his family when they should be settled at Mariton; and he dispatched a person from the maker's, to attend to the removal of it to his warehouse.

It is now time to introduce the rest of the family to the reader. Amidst the gaieties of a fashionable life, the parental affection never ceased to glow in the bosoms of Aubrey and his loved wife: the nursery and the study had shared a much greater portion of their time than is usually bestowed upon them by other parents; and the improvement of their children had kept pace with their ardour and their own endowments.

In the nursery, Mrs. Aubery had been assisted by Mrs. Miller, the worthy woman already mentioned, whose philological learning extended no farther than the orthography of common words, and some of the rules of English grammar: but her pronunciation was not always accurate; her inattention to accents when young had become habitual; her errors were not eradicated by her residence in the family, and she ever retained the odd expletive of 'sbidlikins, which she had caught by noticing Imogen, when she was alarmed at the sight of Guiderius and Arviragus, which had afforded amusement to two successive nurseries. Aubrey's mother had originally engaged her as a nursery-maid. Good humour, a native purity of mind, and a contented spirit, had established her in the family; and when, in the course of time, the empire of the nursery, like greater empires, became extinct, *Patty Miller* was advanced to the honour of dropping her Christian name, and becoming the personal attendant of her lady. In this situa-

tion, *Miller* had a good deal of leisure, which, to her credit it must be told, she employed in reading the Scripture and religious books, with a spirit which, far from casting a gloom upon her manners, rather increased her natural cheerfulness: and this led Aubrey to think that his father's ascribing her studies to a disappointment in love was merely a jest, for opportunities of a good-humoured raillery. She was in fact, however, suspected both by his father and mother, at one time of her life, to have had a serious wound from an arrow of the little god; but the symptoms of it were of so short a continuance, that their suspicions ended in a jocular theme, when they were familiar with Miller. Advancing in life, she was raised to the dignity of housekeeper, with the title of *Mistress*, in which situation she experienced the greatest trials of her life. She loved her master and mistress; and the direction of their household was little more than the management of their misfortunes. Aubrey had been attached to her from his earliest infancy; and, on his reconciliation with his uncle, he took her into his family, made her a considerable allowance, and gave her her option to be housekeeper, or to assist Mrs. Aubrey in her maternal cares. Preferring the latter, she had successively received at their birth, Emily, Arthurina, and Arthur-William: Arthur, it has been seen, was born previous to her coming to the family. The affairs of the nursery were left entirely to her management in the absence of Mrs. Aubrey; and such was her uniform and impartial fondness of the children; such her patience, good-humour, and attention to amuse as well as to instruct, that her little companions doated upon her; and were happier in their own domain than in the apartments devoted to company.

It must be observed, however, that, though the name of nursery was given to that domain, it did not

consist of a single detached room, with beds, at the top of the house. In town, two large rooms, one opening into the other, were devoted to Mrs. Miller's establishment: in the inner room were the beds, and all the apparatus of cleanliness; the outer one was dedicated to pleasure and instruction, which went hand in hand. A common carpet covered the greater part of the floor, and was removed as occasion required; low, heavy stools, that could not be easily overset, were interspersed with chairs; solid tables, for meals, for learning, and amusement, were placed in different parts; and, on the walls, hung large maps, astronomical engravings, and historical prints. Open shelves contained a juvenile library, suited to different capacities, with a variety of mechanical and other figures. There was a cabinet for Mrs. Miller; and a small working-table and boxes, with materials for the girls as they grew up. A good-toned piano-forte completed the furniture. The only difference in the disposition of the nursery at Aubrey-hall, when the family resided with Aubrey's uncle, was, that the bed-room was up stairs, and the other on the ground-floor, with a door opening on a lawn.

The minds of Aubrey's children expanded early and rapidly, and by some it was said, prematurely; but the effect had so visible a cause, that what seemed premature was but the natural result of soil and cultivation. Born perfect and healthy in their persons, the dictates of nature were pursued in preserving them so; and when they began to have the use of their limbs, sports and exercises, talk and example, drew forth the energies of life and intellect. They were reared, not in the chamber of a venal nurse, but in the bosom of their parents*. From

* *Non in cella emptæ nutricis, sed gremio et sinu matris.*

the earliest period of their infancy, they enjoyed the best means of improving and perfecting their faculties. Though Mrs. Aubrey saw much company, the nursery was generally her sitting-room, in which her less ceremonious visitors were often received, and became unconsciously her auxiliaries, by their attentions to the young group, in forming and establishing some of their ideas. Aubrey was a fond father: his instructions were conveyed in amusements; he played with his children, read for them, spouted speeches for them, and danced with them to tunes played on the piano by their mother, or some one of her friends. The little imitators readily caught what was rendered agreeable to their senses; the desire of excelling became a habit imperceptibly, without a mixture of that dangerous emulation which elates one victor, and sows the seeds of vanity and self-conceit in his soul, to depress twenty vanquished, and generate envy in them. With respect to reading and languages, the great point adopted was not to compel the learning of them, but to instil an eagerness to acquire them. That children are too idle and slothful to learn without compulsion, is a slander on infancy; it is the busiest and most active time of life. It is they who ought to direct its energies that are idle, slothful, or ignorant; they who ought to watch the growing passions and expanding capacities, who neglect the means of perfection, or pursue erroneous ones. For one child that is backward from the dulness of its own apprehension, hundreds are retarded by the want of apprehension in their instructors. Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey had learned the secret of making instruction pleasing; and the seeming prematurity of the young Aubreys was in fact the fruit of pleasure:

In aid to Reason was the goddess sent;
To call up all its strength by such a charm.
Pleasure first succours Virtue; in return,
Virtue gives Pleasure an eternal reign.

It was not till the same principle had awakened a passion for the elements of science that Aubrey's eldest son was rewarded with a seat and a desk in his father's study. Having begun his acquaintance with the ancients in the nursery, he glowed for a more intimate knowledge of them, and begged to learn the languages in which they spoke and wrote. In the course of some years of study, assisted by tutors occasionally superintended by his father, his attainments were adequate to the excitement which had been raised in his mind; and at the time of his grandfather's death, he was a fine, handsome youth, seventeen years old, possessing a fund of learning above the usual acquirements of his age. A taste for music he inherited both from his father and mother, and he had not neglected the talents for it with which nature had endowed him. In one thing he was very unlike his father, who was content to take the beaten path of life; whereas, Arthur was eccentric in his notions, and in his actions: a dissimilarity which however proceeded from no dissimilar cause. He had formed ideas of virtue from the examples he had read in his classics; and, after studying in the morning with his tutor, he amused himself in the evening in the parties into which he was at times admitted, in looking for characters resembling those of antiquity. The animal spirits of youth carried him gaily through the hours given to dancing or music; but he found nothing to attach his heart, so different were the people he met with in life from those he doated on in his books. This was not owing to any pedantry in his own mind, but to the vigour of his imagination, that gave a lustre

to the virtues which thronged upon him in perusal, but with which fashionable society, ancient or modern, was never found crowded. By this turn of thought, which he had acquired from his classical tutor, were sown the seeds of a romantic discontent, not unmingled with those of democracy; but they lay concealed in the native cheerfulness of his disposition, and the politeness of his manners.

Emily Aubrey, the elder of his sisters, was about eighteeen months younger than himself, and was not only very like him in countenance but in mind; for Arthur used to delight in communicating his sentiments to her, and in instructing her in parts of the learning which he obtained in the study, and which were not deemed requisite in the nursery. Emily was a sensible, blue-eyed girl, accomplished, and amiable; sufficiently lively, yet less sprightly than the brown-eyed Arthurina, who was all life and spirit, and whose very body in its movements seemed almost incorporeal. Arthurina was fourteen years old, and in face and figure the counterpart of her mother. Arthur-William, almost eleven, greatly resembled his sister Arthurina: he had been removed to the study nearly two years; but was still oftner found in the nursery. Such, with Cæsar, whom the reader already knows and loves, was the family of Aubrey; for, as to those domestics who are attached only by wages and self-interest, they may belong to an establishment, but cannot be considered as constituent parts of a family; and the Aubreys, like other fashionable people, had servants to do the work of the house.

CHAPTER XI.

Aubrey becomes a borrower—His success in this new character—Beneficence on principle contrasted with instinctive benevolence—Unexpected tidings from Mariton.

In the church, as in the army, as in the departments of jurisprudence and of the state, as in the flow of generations, and the perpetual current of human affairs, succession is the support of its very existence. When the commander-in-chief of an army falls, a judge dies, a minister resigns, an ancestor drops into the grave, each makes way for his successor, who has previously been looking at the man whose existence retarded his progress, not only without ill-will, but generally with respect and admiration. The incumbent of Mariton must die before Aubrey could succeed to the rectory; but that Aubrey's thoughts turned on his death, or that the little impatiences which now began to goad his mind were unfriendly to the rector's living half a century more, are positions derogatory to the known benevolence of his character. Mariton and the incumbent were separate ideas; for, though he would sometimes anticipate his family taking possession of the house, and religiously lowering their minds to the happiness of such a competence, yet, in those reveries, he never mingled the imagination of the old man's funeral.

Time passed on, and the money in the hands of Aubrey's banker passed with it. He extended his entertainments to his friends, and his tradesmen extended their credit to him. At the end of a year the incumbent of Mariton was still living, and Aubrey a thousand pounds in debt. His cares now began to make themselves felt: his son Arthur was arrived at the age when it was proper to send him to

the university; but to send him as a gentleman required a considerable expence; and it was postponed from day to day till something favourable should turn up. The payment of the family accounts having been unusually delayed, had caused inquiries to be made, the result of which was not favourable to the state of his finances, and, in consequence, applications became more and more urgent; every one of his tradesmen informing him separately that he was under the necessity of making up a large sum by an appointed day. To satisfy these claims, and stifle the clamour that was ready to break out, Aubrey wrote to several of his acquaintances, to borrow cash. From all he received civil but evasive answers, except two, one of whom, a prudent middle-aged man, cultivated beneficence upon principle; and the other, a youth of fortune, whose benevolence was instinctive. As these letters form a curious contrast, and indeed belong to Aubrey's history, the reader will be gratified to have them preserved. The first was as follows:

"My dear Sir,

"You know that nothing gives me so much "pleasure as being of *real* service to my friends; "and I certainly consider your applying to me as a "great compliment. I shall be happy to lend you "the two hundred pounds you desire to borrow of "me, but I hope you will not be offended at my re- "questing to be made certain that it *will* be of *real* "*service;* in which case, I shall consider the sum "well disposed of, if I never see it again. But if it "be only to stop a gap, if it be to render you only "a temporary service, it will be devoting my means "to no purpose, or rather to a bad one, in protract- "ing your present situation. I do not mean to hurt "you by this reflection; but I fear you have not

" sufficiently considered the consequence of your " uncle's will, and no one will warn you but *a real* " *friend.* Let me advise you to put your affairs in " a train; and, if you find that two hundred pounds " will really complete the discharge of all your debts, " I request you will call upon me for it. I remain,

" My dear Sir,

" Yours sincerely,

" GEORGE GOODGROUND."

The other letter ran thus:

" Why should I send you two hundred pounds, " my dear Mr. Aubrey, when at this moment I can " so well spare three? The inclosed check will, I " trust, answer your purpose. Never think of re- " turning the money till perfectly convenient. Be- " lieve me ever, my dear Sir,

" Your faithful and obliged,

" CHARLES SENSITIVE."

The refusals contained in the other letters made no great impression on Aubrey; but these two, which came by the same post, had a powerful effect on his mind: he was enraptured with the angelic spirit displayed in Sensitive's; and, by the style and advice of Goodground's, was more fully awakened to the alarming progress of his difficulties.

He was sitting with Mrs. Aubrey in the breakfast-room, commenting on the letters just received, when Cæsar came in, and told him, that a stranger from Mariton wished to see him. " From Mariton!" exclaimed Aubrey, " who knows but he brings me " an account of ——" He stopped the train of his thought. " God forgive me!" continued he; " mis- " fortune may plunge me into difficulties, but shall " not corrupt my spirit: no, I wish no man's death!

"—Did he tell you, Cæsar, that he came from Ma-
"riton?"—"He did, Sir," answered Cæsar.—
"Indeed, my Emily, I wished not his death; but
"he was very old and infirm; and, if it has pleased
"God to remove him to a better state ——" Aubrey again stopped; and Mrs. Aubrey, smiling, finished his sentence—"why, in that case," said she, "it will be no impiety to rejoice in *his* happi-
"ness. Cheer up; I shall go to Emily and Arthu-
"rina, and leave you to receive the stranger." She pressed his hand affectionately, and withdrew. Aubrey then bade Cæsar show the person up.

In the few minutes that intervened between Cæsar's leaving the room and returning with the stranger, images inspired by hope presented themselves to Aubrey's mind: Lord Aynsford, the presentation, the bishop, the induction, the payment of his debts in town, the fixing his son at Cambridge, the reception of his family at Mariton, passed rapidly through his brain; and the peal of bells, that shook the steeple, was ringing in his ears when the door opened and the gentleman walked in. He was a man above the middle size, between forty and fifty; the fore-part of his head was bald, the sides and hind-part were covered with natural curls of auburn hair; his eyes were animated and penetrating; and there was, if the expression may be allowed, a cheerful gravity on his countenance, that was characteristic of virtuous adversity, which was farther confirmed by the well-preserved, clean, thread-bare coat upon his back. The neatness of it prevented its appearing shabby; but it must be confessed, that the respect Mr. Cowper commanded at first sight was more owing to that natural dignity which breaks through all disguise, than to the influence of his apparel.

Though there was something in his countenance

which indicated that he was not entirely a stranger, Aubrey's mind was so intent on the subject in his imagination, that he advanced hastily to meet him, saying, " I am glad to see you, Sir; you are just ar- " rived, I understand, from Mariton?"—" No, Sir," replied the stranger, " it is at least a fortnight since " I was there."—" A fortnight!" exclaimed Aubrey, " but the old rector—"—" I see, Mr. Aubrey, that " you have quite forgotten me," said the gentleman; " time and absence have had their effect on " my frame, and on your optics; but give a glance " of retrospection, and in spite of the tenuity of my " drab, and the fortified lines of my visage, you will " recognize a son of Granta."—" Heavens! Cow- " per!" cried Aubrey, presenting his hand as he recollected a gay youth, with whom he had spent some festive hours at Cambridge.—" Even so," said Mr. Cowper, warmly shaking the hand that was offered.—" Come," cried Aubrey, rejoiced to see an old friend, " come, sit down; and tell me what " has become of you all this time, why you have " kept out of the world, and whereabouts you are." —" These questions are soon asked," said Cowper, " but not so soon answered. We will reserve the " account of my life for another opportunity; at " present, I have particular business that concerns " yours." Aubrey was all attention. " Have you " ever been at Mariton, in Leicestershire?" continued Cowper.—" I have," said Aubrey; " but never " to make any stay. The country, I remember, is " pleasant."—" Very pleasant," replied his friend, " and very fashionable. The incumbent of Mari- " ton—"—" Was not only very old, but very in- " firm," added Aubrey.—" That is the point on " which I am come to you," said Cowper; " he " is still very infirm, and grows older every day."

The change of the tense in the little substantive

verb, was an electric shock to Aubrey, who had so wrought up his mind with expectation, that he had not a doubt that the vacancy of the living was the cause of Mr. Cowper's visit. His countenance instantly fell; but he almost as instantly recovered it with a hearty ejaculation of, "God forgive me!" The emotion was not unperceived by his companion, who, however, took no notice of it, but continued speaking.

"The good old patriarch is gently declining to "the tomb; but it may yet be some time before he "is gathered to his fathers. For some years past "he has been unable to discharge the duties of his "church, which he has trusted to a curate, and lives "at Leicester with a near relation, in a house be-"longing to himself. The curate of Mariton has "been presented with a living, and—" Here Mr. Cowper hesitated, and looked stedfastly at Aubrey. "Before I proceed in what I was going to say," resumed he, "let me be certain that I shall not of-"fend. There was a mildness of disposition, a free-"dom from pride, accompanied with rational no-"tions, in your character at college, that I have "since frequently reflected upon with much esteem. "Has the world metamorphosed you? Have you "grown proud, Aubrey? or can you, without an-"ger, listen to truths dictated by pure motives? It "is a very long time since we saw each other, and "you may think that I have no right to take a li-"berty with you."

The surprise occasioned by this unexpected address soon made way for the confidence inspired by the friendly, expressive countenance of Cowper. "It must be a false pride, my friend," said Aubrey, "that could silence truth spoken from pure motives. "Here is my hand, Cowper, and, at the same time, "let me say, that I believe the truths you allude to

" are anticipated in a letter I have just received, " but with motives less pure than will sway them " from your lips." Saying which, he gave Mr. Cowper the letter written by Mr. Goodground.

Mr. Cowper read and smiled. " The prudence " of the sentiment on which this letter is founded," said he, " cannot be disputed."—" But the reason- " ing is surely sophistical," observed Aubrey: he " that removes a pressing evil, at least averts the " effects of it, and by that means leaves time for the " intervention of other causes; but, admitting the " impossibility of a favourable result, is a temporary " relief of no importance in the scale of friendship? " Is none equal to some?"—" My objection to the " letter," said Mr. Cowper, " is, that the real ser- " vice it talks of cannot be the issue of it; for, while " in words it invites a second application, in fact it " precludes it; because a man of any feeling would " sooner go to a prison than repeat a request so " conditioned."—" This," cried Aubrey, taking up Sensitive's letter, " is a pendant for the other; they " came together." The smile of Mr. Cowper, on reading this, had not the slightest affinity with that produced by the former; there was pleasure in it, though not approbation. " This," said he " is more " amiable; but it is the effect of impulse, which is " the parent of imprudence, and leads to ruin. Mr. " Goodground will never diminish the means of be- " neficence; whereas, Mr. Sensitive will probably " soon render himself the object, instead of the " agent, of benevolence. But of these two letters," continued Mr. Cowper, " the former is undoubtedly " the more useful to you; at least, you should make " it so: it does indeed anticipate the truth I was about " to speak. Since I heard of your misfortune, you " have haunted my imagination day and night; and " the recollection of my own sufferings in life has

"impelled me to make you this abrupt visit, in "hope of easing your fall, and saving you from "plunging into an unfathomable gulf, which must "inevitably be the case if you continue to live with- "out a resource: I am therefore come to offer you "the curacy of Mariton; you will find it worth near "a hundred a year. The present curate, I have "told you, is provided for, and must soon quit it. "The incumbent is very old, but he may live some "years; and, in the event of his death, there is lit- "tle doubt of your being continued by his suc- "cessor."

Aubrey here could not help smiling; on which Mr. Cowper looked grave, assured him that he meant no offence, and observed, that he could not deny there was something romantic in the liberty he had taken. "My dear, worthy friend," cried Aubrey eagerly, "do not misunderstand me; were "I certain of a bishopric to-morrow, I could not "but admire a conduct that is the result of such "motives; and, as it is, I cannot be too grateful to "Providence who presents me with the rarest fruit "of adversity, one that I have hitherto thought as "imaginary as the golden apple of the Hesperides. "Yes, Cowper, whatever be my lot, I shall esteem "your friendship an equivalent for the frowns of "fortune."—"Your heart," said Cowper, resuming a smile, "is not unlike Sensitive's; touch it, and it "overflows. Friendship that springs from impulse "is of uncertain duration; but I will say this in fa- "vour of it, in the present instance, that the breath "of truth does not appear to be adverse to it. But "wherefore did you smile?"—"I hope," replied Aubrey, "that you will smile too, when I tell "you; as it will show you that, unfortunate as I am, "my state is far from being desperate: I am myself "to be the successor of the present incumbent of

" Mariton; and, in truth, when a stranger from " Mariton was announced to me, I had no doubt of " receiving tidings of the living being vacant."—" I " do not wonder that you smiled; but, on what found- " ation is your hope built?"—" My Lord Ayns- " ford himself, the patron, made me a voluntary of- " fer of it, the very day I informed him of the un- " fortunate will left by my uncle unrevoked; nay, " he raised my hopes much higher."—" As the of- " fer was voluntary," said Mr. Cowper, " I trust it " is sincere; but a large family cannot live upon " hope. Did you ever apply to him for a loan of " money?"—" Never," replied Aubrey, " we have " always lived upon the most intimate footing; but, " after his promise of the presentation, I should " never have thought of making a request of that " nature to him, even had I been in want of it; but " I have not needed a supply till within a few weeks, " that my tradesmen have shown themselves uneasy; " and Lord Aynsford went abroad with his family " some months ago."—" You have done right; and " may your expectations be realized! but let not " your dependence upon them cause you to run " meanwhile into destruction. I tell you fairly, I " am of opinion, that the incumbent of Mariton will " live some years. I know how hard it is to de- " scend; but, trust me, it is less galling than to be " pushed down. If you accept the curacy, you will " have a good house over your head; a garden that " will provide you vegetables and afford you fruit; " and money to find you bread, clothes, and firing; " and to this you may add, if you please, that it will " save you the trouble and expence of removing, " when you become the rector, as you will be al- " ready settled."

New to the language of care and foresight, Aubrey was startled at the idea of its being necessary

to think of bread, clothes, and firing; but his understanding was sound, and his heart had not been corrupted by prosperity; he was easily convinced of the propriety of immediately taking a decisive part, and he felt a cordial affection for his convincer. After a little more conversation, therefore, in which Mr. Cowper informed him, that he had been commissioned by the incumbent of Mariton to look for a suitable person to undertake his duty, Aubrey agreed to consult with Mrs. Aubrey on the subject, and determine without delay. Mr. Cowper said, that he was going out of town for two days, but would see him again on the third; and he was prevailed upon to promise to dine and spend the evening in Albemarle-street, on condition of meeting only the family.

CHAPTER XII.

An expedient presents itself—New sensations—A dilemma of conscience.

It must be allowed that there is a very great difference between the idea of posting down to be inducted into a rich rectory; and being sent quietly to a parish to read prayers and preach, marry, christen, and bury, for stated wages. Let the man who would not prefer the former to the latter, condemn the feelings and irresolution that prevailed in the mind of Aubrey and his sympathising wife, when, after Mr. Cowper's departure, they compared the two pictures, as painted by the powerful pencil of Fancy: on the one hand, respect, court, spirit; on the other, surprise, coldness, humility. Then they recollected several of their acquaintance that lived

in the county: Sir Richard and Lady Vulture; old Mrs. Grinaway, and her daughters the Miss Grinaways; Lord and Lady Dirk; and some others.

They had basked too long in the smiles of unclouded prosperity, not to shudder at the chilling prospect that seemed to them to fill the contracted horizon of a country curate. When they had discussed the subject, they continued undetermined; but, both possessing good sense, as the emotions of pride abated, the suggestions of reason were not denied attention. Goodground's letter and Mr. Cowper's visit seconded the urgency of the tradesmen; and, after two or three silent turns up and down the room, Mrs. Aubrey ejaculated; "but "what shall we do?"

It was not easy to reply; Aubrey had no answer ready: he took her hand, and raising it to his lips, kissed it ardently; then continued walking in silence some minutes longer, when an expedient occurred to him, which would have occurred much sooner to one accustomed to the vicissitudes of life; but he was more in the habit of drawing upon his banker than upon his wits for pecuniary supplies. He thought of disposing of his paintings, that remained unpacked, from the sale of which a little fortune might be raised; or, at least, money enough to discharge all his debts, and enable his family to live on a decent footing with his acquaintance, till — "God forgive me, Emily," said he, when he got to the word *till* — till something turned up.

Paintings being as necessary to a man of taste and fortune as a Highlander's figure to a tobacconist, Aubrey, who was no great connoisseur himself in that noble art, had, with the consent of his uncle, and the advice of several of his amateur friends, collected some very valuable pieces, which, as originals of the great masters of the Italian and Flemish

schools, were rated at a very high price. They had cost little less than twelve thousand pounds. The recollection of these paintings, and the resolution of turning them into money, restored cheerfulness to the minds of this affectionate couple; their countenances resumed their wonted smiles, and they planned, in happy mood, the disposition of the produce of the works of Raphael, Titian, Guido, Claude Lorraine, Rubens, and Teniers, together with those of several minor names, whose pencils added something to their treasure. It was agreed, that one-half of the sum, or at least five thousand pounds, should be put by for a rainy day; and that the other half should be applied to pay the demands of the tradesmen, and to support the house till — something turned up. Cowper and the curacy were forgotten in this arrangement; Mrs. Aubrey tripped off gaily to assist Emily in practising a duet; and Aubrey issued forth, with renovated spirits, to consult Sir Kit Keeping on the sale of the pictures.

Crossing Piccadilly, he walked down St. James's street; about the middle of which, he observed three gentlemen, arm in arm, sauntering up: with two of them he had a common acquaintance; the third, who was in the middle, was one of his intimates, to whom he had written to borrow money, and from whom he had received a civil evasion. Though at some distance, their eyes met: those of his friend's were immediately averted; and Aubrey plainly saw him press the arms of the gentlemen walking with him; on which they all three turned abruptly into a shop. A sudden, faint feeling sunk his heart. This indication of his fall was more painful than those he had already received from the urgency of duns, the caution of beneficence, and the offer of bread, clothes, and firing. He looked into the shop as he passed, and again met the eyes of his acquaint-

ance, without the slightest interchange of recollection. His heart now swelled with disgust and resentment; and, by the time he got to Pall-Mall, he had thrice wished himself at Mariton, without thinking whether as rector or curate. "Is this the "state," thought Aubrey, "that we are anxious "to sustain! this the society to which we are so "wedded! Vile, unstable, illiberal man! Is there "any change in my countenance, or in my heart? "It is the chemistry of SELF, which dissolves all "combinations of the social principle:—social prin-"ciple! psha! social hypocrisy!"

The discontented suggestions of philosophy poured in upon his mind, and so absorbed his senses, that he passed Sir Kit Keeping's door, and was at the bottom of Pall-mall, before he recollected himself. As he turned to go back, he saw the Baronet alight from his carriage, which immediately drew off. He could not have been in the house three minutes, when Aubrey knocked at the door, and was informed that he was not at home. "O, yes, "he is, Thomas," said Aubrey, "and I have some-"thing to say to him which he will be very glad to "hear. Go, my good fellow, go and tell him that "I am come to talk to him about some capital pic-"tures."—"Sir, upon my word—" Thomas was going to asseverate his master's absence from home, when the parlour-door, which stood ajar, was thrown open, and Sir Kit himself, with an angry voice, reprimanded him for not recollecting that he was always at home to Mr. Aubrey. "Walk in, walk in, "Aubrey; I am but just come home," continued he, as Aubrey entered the parlour, "and I gave a ge-"neral order to be denied, having another appoint-"ment presently, with Sir Joshua: this stupid fel-"low of mine forgot that I could always take the "liberty with you to mention my engagements.

"Well, but what pictures are these, ey?"—"Some "that you have seen, Sir Kit, and praised *con amore;* "my own small collection."—"I remember you "had some very fine originals, Aubrey."—"Why "*had*, Baronet?" said Aubrey.—"Ey! I was only "afraid, as they were purchased with your uncle's "money, that they might have gone with Aubrey-"hall into Arthur's hands. Why! Arthur is making "the devil of a show there in the country."

This remark renewed the sinking which Aubrey had experienced in St. James's-street, and from which he had almost recovered on introducing the subject of the pictures to the Baronet. He was silent. "What, then, they are still in your posses-"sion?" said Sir Kit. Finding Aubrey's countenance dejected, and receiving no reply—"Come," continued he, "don't be downcast, man! these "paintings will be a little fortune to you; they will "at least secure you bread and cheese. I advise "you to sell them by all means: I will look at them "for you, and do my best to set them off." Aubrey knew Sir Kit to be a connoisseur of great influence; this advice and proffer were, therefore, of the utmost importance, and made him stomach the bread and cheese which had been thrust down his throat. "I thank you, Sir Christopher," replied he; "and, to say the truth, it is what I came to "consult you upon."—"You are a good fellow, "Aubrey," said the Baronet, "and I feel devilishly "interested about you. What do you mean to do? "You must yield to fate. Damn it, there's no "help for it. The country, ey, the country must be "your plan. What do you think of a small farm, "ey? How old are your daughters? it is not impos-"sible you may settle them well among the farmers "sons: for I suppose you give up all ideas of "matching them in high life, ey?"

Had the Baronet confined his advice and remarks to Aubrey himself and his pictures, the passive qualities of the latter might have borne him to a patient termination of this visit; but, when he touched the master-chord of his heart, and it would have been the same had it been as delicately as it was coarsely done, the vibration shot vigorously to the brain, and awakened in his soul the just resentments of a natural pride. "Sir," said he, darting an angry look at the Baronet, "this is not the language of "friendship; it is not even that of good manners. "I am not so lost as you are pleased to think. "Were it worth my while, Sir, I would convince "you—Sir, the value of the rectory—bread and "cheese! farmers sons!"—"Nay, but, my good "Aubrey," said Sir Kit, "you are hasty. Now, "what have I said that's unreasonable? I did not "know that you had any antipathy to bread and "cheese and farmers sons."—"I see," said Aubrey, recovering his temper, and rising from his chair as he spoke, "I see that I have new lessons to "study; but I am not too old to learn: that which "you have now set me, Sir, I trust, will not be lost." —Sir Christopher stared; and Aubrey, without farther ceremony, quitted the house, leaving both the parlour and the street-door open after him.

Looking towards St. James's, he saw several parties of gentlemen coming down the side of the street on which he was. It was probable, that the three whom he had met before were on the pavement:—Aubrey crossed to the other side: the impulse that made him cross was a sensation to which he had hitherto been an utter stranger—it was painful, but he walked half-way up to the palace before he detected the nature of it, and then not clearly; he knew not whether it were false shame, or pride. He again thought of Mariton, and wished himself far

removed from the hot-beds of dissimulation and corrupted self-love.

As he approached the palace, he felt an arm gently lodged on his own; and, turning his head to the side whence the pressure came, saw the smiling countenance of young Sensitive, who, having overtaken him, continued to walk his pace. After exchanging the usual salutation; "I saw you," said Sensitive, "come out of Sir Christopher's, and "quickened my pace to overtake you, but you walk "so fast, had there been any turns I should have "lost you." This unexpected meeting, this friendly pursuit,—alas! poor human nature!—awakened another new sensation in Aubrey's breast: for the first time of his life he was in company with a man to whom he was under pecuniary obligation; from whom he had but that very morning received a loan of three hundred pounds. Aubrey cared so little for money himself, and was so charmed with generosity, that it is probable the sensation, though new, would not have been accompanied with any pain, had it not been for the disturbed state of his mind, produced by reflections on the mortifying occurrences of the morning. It was necessary to make an acknowledgment; but, in doing it, the gloom of his countenance was not removed, and the weight upon his heart was increased. "I thank you kindly, my "dear Sensitive, for your friendly attention to my "request. I assure you ——."

Aubrey was going to enter into a serious apology for becoming a borrower, and to expound his means of repayment; but was prevented by his friend, who could even less than himself bear the subject: he thought it must give Aubrey pain, and felt a double pain at the idea; he, therefore, hastily interrupted him: "Pooh!—I beseech you, Aubrey," cried he, "not to distress me. Has Sir Kit Keeping any

" thing new?"—" Yes," replied Aubrey, " he has " a new language. The Baronet is so well versed " in painting, that he conceives rapidly the position " of the figures on the canvas: he has just been " making me sensible that I am to take a station in " the back-ground."—" Proud, empty puppy!" said Sensitive; " I always hated that fellow. You " must have observed that his court is invariably " paid in due gradation of rank and fortune. The " conduct of such a creature would never make me " uneasy for a moment. I have little doubt that, by " means of some of your numerous friends, you will " meet with great preferment in the church." Aubrey seized this occasion to mention the friendship of Lord Aynsford, and the prospect, certainly not distant, he had of the rectory of Mariton. Sensitive expressed his pleasure, and conversed in such easy and unassuming terms, that Aubrey totally lost the sensation he experienced when accosted by him: pride and pain were dissolved by the modesty and affability of his friend, in whose contempt for the Baronet he heartily joined; and, losing sight of debtor and creditor, recovered his natural good-humour both with himself and with the world, and strolled, arm in arm, with Sensitive through the Park, conversing gaily on the topics of the day.

The business which he had set out from home to transact remained unadvanced; but, at length recurring to his mind, he stated it to Sensitive, who, without making any pretensions, possessed considerable judgment and execution in the art of painting. He asked Aubrey if he did not think an auction would be the most likely mode to produce the real value of the pictures? The suggestion met Aubrey's assent; and they went immediately together to consult Mr. Flourish, the celebrated auctioneer, on the mode of exhibiting them, and on the pro-

perest time for the sale. They fortunately found him at home. Mr. Flourish was himself esteemed a great connoisseur in paintings, and was known to talk on the subject as well as any, and better than most of the acknowledged judges in the fashionable world. He assured Aubrey that originals never failed to bring their full value at a well-timed auction; and that he had often known a good copy long suspend the hammer, and go at last as the *chef-d'œuvre* of a master of the sixteenth century, while he saw the painter of the piece maliciously grinning in a corner of the room. "But how," said Aubrey, "do you "reconcile your knowledge of the fact with your "conscience?"—"Oh! my dear Sir," exclaimed Mr. Flourish, "rather ask, how I should reconcile "with conscience betraying the secrets of the pro- "fession, and injuring the interests of my employ- "ers and best friends, whose conscience is as pure "as ignorance of the fact can make it? Oh! oh!"— "True," said Aubrey, "I forgot the dilemma." It was then agreed that the pictures should be sent to Mr. Flourish's rooms, and immediately advertised.

CHAPTER XIII.

However obscure the ways of Providence, a sound mind naturally endeavours to trace them.

THE conversation of a pure and open-hearted youth, and the arrangement for disposing of his pictures, had drawn off Aubrey's attention from the mortifications he had received: but, scarcely had he parted with Sensitive, when the recollection of them revived his disgust at the world, heated his fancy with images of new insults, and again directed his wishes to Mariton and a country life. He was, however,

unwilling to plant stings in the heart of the woman he loved; and he therefore resumed all the cheerfulness he could as he entered his house, met his family with smiles, talked of the hopes he had conceived from his interview with Mr. Flourish, and gave Cæsar directions for the removal of the pictures in the morning.

In spite of his efforts to preserve a gaiety of countenance, he frequently caught himself in a reverie, and he observed a gloom on every face, of which he suspected his own dejection to be the cause. He dined alone with his family; and afterwards had recourse, with success, to their musical talents to recover his spirits: they played, sung, danced, forgot the world, and were happy.

The next morning the pictures were removed to Mr. Flourish's, and Aubrey spent the forenoon in examining them, and placing them in the best lights, according to the subjects. In this he followed his own judgment; for both his friend Sensitive and Mr. Flourish were otherwise engaged; and, as for applying to any other connoisseur, Sir Kit Keeping's bread and cheese still stuck in his throat, and prevented him: besides, he was himself sufficiently skilled in light and shade to conduct this work, and he took pleasure in superintending it. When the paintings were all properly disposed, he paraded some time before them, surveying with pride and hope the means that were to suspend the fall of his family; and then returned to Albemarle-street, to dress before dinner, at which he expected company.

At his door he found Cæsar arguing against the importunity of several tradesmen, who were insisting on seeing his master. This was another new situation: his heart received and ejected the stream of life with violence. He entered the parlour, and desired they would follow him. He expressed his

surprise at their impatience; and, at the same time acknowledging the justness of their demands, said he was sorry to postpone the payment of them, not having by him the sum to which they amounted, but that they might depend upon having their accounts settled shortly. He was requested by one of them to specify the time. "In a week or ten days," said Aubrey; "perhaps it may be a fortnight."—"Why! "to be sure, Sir," said Mr. Prim the upholsterer, "a fortnight is no time; but I have passed my word "to make a large payment by the eighteenth, which "is the beginning of the week, and I shall be put "to my trumps to do it. I have no objection to a "draft on a banker at fourteen days date; for it will "answer my purpose just as well as money."—"I "have no objections to the same," was echoed by the other tradesmen.

Aubrey, unaccustomed to putting off demands, and above shuffling, was at first at a loss what to say; but, trusting to the force of candour, he replied, that it was impossible. "Gentlemen," said he, "I have at present no banker to draw upon. I "see that, aware of the situation into which I have "been unexpectedly thrown, you are alarmed for "your money: now, be assured, that the injury "and unhappiness of non-payment would be infi- "nitely more to me than to you. Feeling this, I "am just now returned from transacting some busi- "ness, by which a fund is to be provided for the "settlement of my affairs. I can do nothing more "than repeat what I have said; and, consider- "ing the moneys you have formerly received, I "think it should satisfy you."—"Why, to be "sure," answered Mr. Prim, who seemed to be the orator of the group, "you speak like a gentle- "man, Mr. Aubrey; and you can't wonder that, in "these times, men in business should look about

" them: but, as I said before, a fortnight's no " time; so, for my part, seeing you promise so " fairly, I will manage to make up my money some " other way."—" I have no objections," said Mr. Pruin, the grocer, " to following Mr. Prim's ex- " ample; for I knows Mr. Prim to be a prudent " man: but I must say that, though I thinks Mr. " Aubrey is one of the most well-spoken gentlemen " I know, it is going too far to our faces to tell us, " that if he should not pay us, he would be the " most injured and unhappy person."—" Pho!" cried Mr. Prim, interrupting him, " how can you, " Mr. Pruin, expose such a want of education! " Don't you know what sentiment is? It is the way " gentlemen feel. What Mr. Aubrey said in that " regard was only sentiment, not real; only honour, " not hard cash."—" Oh! I understand now," said Pruin. " I beg your pardon, Mr. Aubrey; I have " no objection, Sir, to wait. I hope Mrs. Aubrey " and all your good family are well, Sir." The other persons consented to wait likewise, and made similar inquiries; for which he thanked them, and they went away.

A scene still more mortifying awaited him up stairs. Passing towards his dressing-room he heard a violent scuffle in the apartment which, on the family's coming to the house, had been devoted to study. He flew to the door, and, as he opened it, saw his son Arthur ward a blow made at him by his tutor, Mr. Williams, and return one that felled him to the ground. " Good Heaven! what do I see?" exclaimed Aubrey; " what can this mean?" Arthur stood confounded at seeing his father; the tutor lay motionless on the floor; Aubrey endeavoured in vain to raise him. Alarmed lest the blow were fatal, he rang the bell, intending to send for a surgeon; but, before Cæsar came up, the tutor began to stir.

Arthur had struck him on the temple and stunned him, but had done him no greater injury: he soon recovered his senses; and, being desired by Aubrey to account for the indecent act, to the last part of which he had been a witness, took his hat, and said he should leave his son to account for it. "That "I am ready to do, Sir," said Arthur; "but, with "my father's leave, I shall keep you to hear my "account." Saying which, he placed himself before the door, to prevent Williams passing. "Very "well, young man," cried the enraged tutor: "you "not only assault me under your father's roof, in "despite of every moral rule, but you make me a "prisoner."—"You shall be no prisoner here," said Aubrey; "yet give me leave, Mr. Williams, "to express my surprise that you should avoid "taking part in the explanation which the circum-"stance requires. If Arthur has been the aggres-"sor, be assured his being my son will be an addi-"tional motive for my displeasure: let me know "what is the cause of this." Williams hung his head and was silent. "The cause," said Arthur, "is plainly this: I have lately found him to be a "villain, and was this day provoked to tell him so." —"How, Arthur!" cried Aubrey, "what language "is this! whatever you might have been led to "think, you did not, I hope, make use of such a "term."—"I did not, Sir," replied Arthur, "till "he had called you a beggar; I then, being pro-"voked beyond bearing to hear you so abused, told "him he was a villain; on which, trusting to his "strength, he aimed a blow at me, which, had I not "parried it, might have killed me; but, thanks to "the lessons I learned in the country, my skill out-"matched his force: I was beating him before you "came in, and he must have soon yielded, even if "he had not received the blow that stunned him."

—" Beggar! Mr. Williams," said Aubrey, looking with conscious dignity at the tutor, who at length raised his head, and, re-assuming the air of philosophical consequence, of which his drubbing had deprived him, began an oration, which he addressed to Aubrey: " To take any notice of your son's scur-
" rility, Mr. Aubrey," said he, " would be to de-
" grade the prerogative of reason. I shall only say,
" that, notwithstanding your restriction of my in-
" structions to the classics, I have thought it a duty
" superior to all others to instil into his mind just
" notions of the nature of things. I was but illus-
" trating the nature of the equality of man, by con-
" sequences drawn from your reverse of fortune;
" when, as if he had suddenly changed the opinions
" he had formed upon the subject, he took pet at
" me, grew testy, and at last proceeded to inso-
" lence and to blows."—" It was not for your opi-
" nions on the equality of men," said Arthur,
" which I allow are very just; but for your bruta-
" lity, that I treated you as I will every man, high,
" low, or equal, who shall dare to speak a humi-
" liating syllable of my father."

The horror that began to rise in Aubrey's mind, as his son declared his approbation of a levelling principle, was suddenly diverted by the conclusion of his sentence, and gave way to a feeling of the most delightful kind. As he looked at the beautiful, elegant, brave youth, whose auburn hair flowed in disordered ringlets round his countenance, whose dress was discomposed by the combat he had maintained, and whose slim figure formed a striking contrast to the broad, clumsy person of the vanquished tutor, his ear drank the sweet sounds of filial love, his bosom glowed, his brow softened, a smile flew to his lip, and a tear to his eye. He threw himself into Arthur's arms, pressed him to

his bosom; and, turning to the miscreant whom his son had chastised, repeated with a smile: "Beg-" gar! Mr. Williams, what think you of my for-" tune now?"

Williams made an attempt to leave the room. "Before you go, Sir," continued Aubrey, "is not "there an account to be settled between us?"— "You know very well," replied Williams sullenly, "that there is nothing due to me."—"And is that "all?" said Aubrey; "is there no balance due to "me? Does your memory refuse to furnish you "with the amount?" Williams was silent. "Then "I'll tell you what it is," proceeded Aubrey; "my "advance to you amounts to fifty pounds; but go, "and never let me see you more; and, as an addi-" tional punishment to that you have already re-" ceived from my son, I acquit you of the debt." The tutor looked at Aubrey, then at Arthur, then again at Aubrey, as if he were going to say something; but he seemed struck dumb, bit his lips, and walked away.

On his leaving the room, Arthur informed his father that he had lately failed in respect in talking of him; that he had more than once said, that there was nothing he so much enjoyed as the fall of a rich man; and that, in defending his opinion to-day, he had made such insolent applications to the family as were not to be borne. "I see, my dear boy," said Aubrey, "that, in spite of his talents and educa-" tion, he is a great scoundrel; I need no other "conviction than a sentiment which fell from your "own lips: but of that we must converse when we "have more time; at present, we have scarcely "enough to dress ourselves before the company will "be here."—"I believe, Sir," said Arthur, "that "some change has taken place; the friends you ex-" pected do not come to-day. My mother will in-

" form you more. Shall we go to her?" Aubrey looked surprised, and silently suffered himself to be led by his son to the nursery, where Emily, Arthurina, and Arthur-William, flew from Mrs. Aubrey's side to load him with caresses.

Having indulged in these, and spoken kindly to Mrs. Miller, who was on all occasions admitted into the confidence of the family; " Well, Emily," said he, extending his hand to Mrs. Aubrey, who bestowed on it a pressure which conveyed more than the usual welcome of affection—it was a delicate, tremulous touch, that marked a tender concern for the new, painful feelings, to which misfortune had doomed him—" Well, Emily, my love, are we to " have the pleasure of dining to-day likewise *en fa-* " *mille?*"—" So it seems, my dear Aubrey," replied she, taking half a dozen notes from her workbox, and giving them to him. They were apologies; but worded so nearly alike, that they very plainly spoke their purpose and their source. One will show not only the spirit, but almost the letter of the rest.

" Lord and Lady Aimwell present compliments, " and are much mortified in requesting that Mr. " and Mrs. Aubrey will accept an apology for not " attending their party to-day. They deprive them- " selves of the pleasure on a very particular occa- " sion respecting some extraordinary original paint- " ings; and the circumstance will be fully explained " by their mutual friend, Sir Kit Keeping."

The notes were clearer to Aubrey than to any other of the group around him; and his encounter with the connoisseur Baronet being necessary to the complete unravelling of these insulting apologies, he sat down amidst the darlings of his heart, and fully unbosomed himself. Having related the mortifying occurrences of the two last mornings, he learned in

turn from Mrs. Aubrey, that she had received some very rude applications for money; and that the gloom he had perceived on the countenances of his wife and children, arose from Arthur's account of his tutor, which he had given before Aubrey's return, with much warmth and resentment; and which his mother had desired him not to trouble his father with at present. "My dear children," said Aubrey, "these are the first lessons of adversity. "What we are not wise enough to learn by precept, "we must by experience. Dear Emily!" continued he, addressing Mrs. Aubrey, "let us make "the true use of these occurrences,—in the most "noisome plants bees find the supplies for honey;— "instead of considering them as mortifications, let "us look upon them as the operations of guardian "angels, solicitous to remove our innocent children "from the vortex of corruption, and to save both "them and us before it is too late. The ways of "Providence are inscrutable; yet they are not al- "ways so obscure but that we may often trace the "most benignant motives in the evils that befal us. "You have several tales and fables on this subject, "my loves, in the Spectator, Rambler, and other "books."—"Oh, yes, papa," said Arthurina; "it "was only this morning that I read to mamma the "story of Bozaldab; and Arthur-William the vision "of Amanda, from the Beauties of History."— "And what did you read, my dear Emily," said Aubrey to his eldest daughter.—"I only worked "and listened, papa," replied she: "but, if you "wish it, I will make amends by repeating Parnel's "Hermit."—"She can say it without missing a "word, pa'," cried Arthur-William. "Then, my "dear girl," said Aubrey, "you shall repeat it after "dinner, to set us completely to rights. In the "mean time, let me observe, that we are never so

" sensible of the lessons conveyed in these moral
" tales, as when they go home to our own bosoms. I
" see in the mortifying occurrences of yesterday
" and to-day a warning to leave town, and not to
" reject the curacy of Mariton; I see, in the loss
" of Aubrey-hall, a reprehension of the easy, care-
" less life I have led, and a vocation to an active
" ministry in the sacred profession, for which I was
" ordained, and which I have entirely neglected.
" I see," continued he, after a pause, and looking at his son; " oh! Arthur, I see—yes, I hope I see
" your mind snatched from a gulf over which it
" hung, through the confidence I too readily placed
" in the vain, foolish fellow, who received his desert
" from your hands—my dear boy, you stood on a
" precipice!"—" My dear Sir," said Arthur, " the
" voice of reason must be heard, even when it
" comes from such a man: but pray, do not be un-
" easy about me; for reason and affection unite to
" make your happiness of more consequence to me
" than any thing else on earth." Mrs. Aubrey gave Arthur one of those affectionate, approving looks, which he often deservedly received from her. " The voice of reason," said his father, taking his hand, and pressing it affectionately, " *shall* be
" heard, my dear Arthur; for, though that of
" presumption is often mistaken for it, you have an
" understanding, I am sure, that will readily dis-
" tinguish the difference." Here Cæsar announced that dinner was served up. Cheerfulness reigned at the table, notwithstanding the defection of the company: Parnel's poem, modestly, and elegantly recited by Emily, crowned the desert with a confirmation of the precepts of resignation; and the songs of the evening were intermixed with conversation on an immediate removal to Mariton.

CHAPTER XIV.

The family unanimous respecting Mariton—A benevolent exertion in an old acquaintance—Pious resolutions—More of Mr. Cowper.

A FAMILY, healthy and united, are always prepared to sustain the malice of fortune. The smiles of the world, like the warmth of a common fire, require to be sustained by the labour or expence of those who would be cheered by them, and, like that, may be extinguished by accident or design: but the smiles of a virtuous family, like the matter of heat itself, which is inherent in the constitution of nature, are inseparable from it, and cease not to animate and cheer while life remains. Aubrey, awakened to his errors, began to see favour in misfortune: the mortifications by which the family had been damped, terminated in increasing the glow of natural affection; and now, instead of looking back either with regret or resentment, they contemplated the prospects yet reserved for them with hope and delight.

They assembled next morning in the nursery to breakfast. "I have thought of nothing but Mariton all night long," said Arthurina; "I could "not sleep for it."—"It has run in my mind too," said her sister; "I know we shall be so happy in the "country."—"While we continue to love one an-"other," said Mrs. Aubrey, "we shall be happy any "where."—"Well, Mrs. Miller," said Aubrey, "what think you of Mariton?"—"God send we "were all housed there, say I," replied she; "I "was sadly afeard we were to have the old life over "again; grandeur and want, state and starvation. "My dear, worthy, old master and mistress broke "their hearts, because they could not lower their "pride. I am glad, very glad, you are wiser."—

" 'Sbidlikins! Mrs. Miller," cried Arthur, " do " you know you are talking of my grandfather and " grandmother?"—" Ay, God bless you, Mr. Ar- " thur, I do; and my master knows what I say to be " true, and how I loved them both. Bating their " nobility and greatness, there did not exist two " better or nobler souls on the yearth; but they could " never give up exterials and show for reality and " comfort. Well! I hope I shall never live to see " again what they suffered. As for my part, Ma- " dam," said she to Mrs. Aubrey, " I only wish I " had orders to begin packing up all your things. " 'Sbidlikins; I am for going in time: a burnt child " dreads the fire."—" 'Sbidlikins! that is not true, " Mrs. Miller," cried Arthur-William; " do you " remember, a long time ago, when I burnt my- " self, I still went on lighting crackers to frighten " you?"—" Well then, Miller," said Aubrey, " you " may begin to pack up immediately, if your mis- " tress pleases; for, as we all seem of one mind re- " specting Mariton, the sooner we go the better; " and I will hasten my arrangements to go off, if " possible, next week."

Arthurina clapped her hands, winked her eyes, and huzzaed; the others caught the huzza, and the nursery was all uproar for some minutes, with jump- ing, dancing, and shouting. " How shall we travel?" said Emily.—" Oh! in the coach, to be sure," cried Arthurina: " it is a nice, roomy coach, and held us " all so comfortably going to France."—" I long to " have the house to rights," said Emily: " I hope " there's a good music-room—oh, la! papa! the " organ; we have not heard it so long; it must be " put up; we shall be so happy! I hope the people " at Mariton are musical!"—" We will have such a " charming library, Emily," said Arthur, " and take " such pleasant walks and rides."—" 'Sbidlikins!"

exclaimed Mrs. Miller, "one would conceive you "were going to set off post for Aubrey-hall, instead "of a little parsonage-house."—"Is it very little, "papa?" cried Arthurina.—"I have never seen the "house, my love," replied he; "but you may be "sure, compared with Aubrey-hall, it is small: yet "I have no doubt we shall find it commodious; for "the rectory is a rich one. But let us resolve to "be happy, or, rather, let us deserve to be happy, "and the size of it will not much signify."

They continued planning their happiness till Aubrey was called to a gentleman in the parlour. His heart overflowed with affection and joy. What were wealth and worldly consequence to a man possessed of such celestial treasures! Would he have exchanged them for millions of the richest coin? With which of his children would he have parted for a throne? They were indeed intrinsic wealth; their countenances the stamp of the genuine coin of the soul; their virtues the warrant of a heavenly avarice. The slightest diminution of love, the loss of a beloved object, would have been ruin indeed; but fortune, but money, was enjoyed only in getting rid of it. Glorying in love, and despising riches, he went down stairs, and, in the parlour, found a man who had neither wife nor children; and who, had he been offered his choice of a son or a ten pound bank-note, would have preferred the latter blessing: an assertion which, though it may surprise some parents, will create no wonder among justices of the peace and parish officers.

Aubrey took Mr. Elton by the hand, and, not having seen him for some time, asked him how long he had been in town? "I am but just arrived, my "friend," said he; "I have travelled all night. I "come to town on a business most interesting to "humanity: poor Winfield! I don't believe you

"know him: he was the most affectionate father! "he had retired from the service for some time—his "lieutenant's half-pay was the only support of his "charming family—they are lovely children, Au- "brey; but they have lost him, and with him every "means of subsistence; he is dead, and Heaven "knows what is to become of them. My intention "is to interest every friend I have, to obtain some- "thing for them from the government: you have "more powerful interest than I have, and I am come "to you the very first." Aubrey's imagination readily took the impression of this sketch, and soon formed it into a complete picture of distress. The faces he had just left up stairs remained in his mind, but fancy changed their smiles to tears, and the sorrows of the lieutenant's children were seen on the features of his own. "Alas! Elton," said he, "my "interest is not what it was; yet there are some "whom I have never tried, and therefore must not "condemn. I will not hesitate to prove their hearts "on this occasion, while you apply to others of your "friends."—"I dare say," replied Mr. Elton, "that "a provision of some kind will be obtained in time; "but I dread their immediate sufferings; and, to "apply for private pecuniary assistance to strangers, "would be to wound the feelings of the unhappy "family. I have myself, as a friend, gone beyond "what I ought, and indeed have distressed myself "so much for cash, that I really thought of asking "you to lend me a hundred pounds for a short "time."

As Aubrey was not in want of cash himself, he had never thought of sending the check he received from Sensitive to the banker. It was not enough to discharge the demands with which he had been pressed, and he had kept it in his pocket-book without thinking farther of it. He meant, indeed, to have

returned it to Sensitive, as he was not likely to want money before his pictures were sold; but he now deemed it fortunate that he had not. He mentioned it to Mr. Elton, who offered to bring him the cash for it, as he was going near the banker's. Aubrey gave it to him. "The poor Winfields," said Mr. Elton, "shall be the better for your kind loan. By "this night's post they shall receive a supply. I "do not ask you to contribute yourself."—"But I "do not the less mean it," replied Aubrey; "pray "let thirty pounds of the supply be on my account, "and you can give me the balance of the check to-"morrow morning. Will you breakfast with me? "To-day I am particularly engaged." Mr. Elton made the warmest acknowledgments in the names of the unhappy Winfields; and, having accepted Aubrey's invitation to breakfast next morning at nine o'clock, took his leave.

Aubrey retired to the study, where he remained a considerable time, reviewing his past life, imagining the future, and forming such resolutions as might atone for his former inactivity and remissness. He promised his conscience that he would not only perform the public offices of the church, but that he would in private be the pastor and teacher of his parishioners; that he would alike gather the rich and the poor into the fold of his Master; and that his own family should set an example, not only of virtue, but of piety, to the whole country. The more he reflected, the more he was satisfied with the interposition of Providence; a glow of self-approbation pervaded his frame, and he remembered his friend Cowper's appointment with pleasing expectation.

At the hour appointed, Mr. Cowper came: he appeared in the same neat thread-bare drab coat he wore at his first visit; and, as then, won respect and

affection by his bald head, penetrating eyes, dignity of demeanour, and friendly designs. He was warmly introduced by Aubrey to Mrs. Aubrey; and individually to Arthur, Emily, Arthurina, and Arthur-William; and, by his amiable manners, was soon on a footing of intimacy with them all. Before they went to dinner, he was informed of Aubrey's resolution to accept the curacy of Mariton, made acquainted with the plans of the family, and asked a variety of questions respecting the house, the appearance of the country, and the characters of the inhabitants. He was describing some of these when they were summoned to dinner. Mariton continued the subject of conversation; it seemed possessed of inexhaustible topics; and Mr. Cowper was so charmed with the innocent gaiety and spirits of his young friends, that he took pleasure in gratifying them with minute details.

After a description of the house, from which it appeared, to the delight of all the family, that it was not the little parsonage Mrs. Miller had forejudged, but a considerable building, of a handsome appearance, and very pleasantly situated on the bank of a trout-stream; and, after the young people had laid out every room in it and every spot about it according to their fancy, placed the organ, arranged the library, stocked the pond with carp, collected blackbirds and thrushes in the shrubbery, and lodged the coach in the coach-house, Mr. Cowper, with a friendly laugh, told them, he had never heard that there was any gold-mine in the premises. The girls did not exactly comprehend him; but Aubrey did, and explained the resource he meant to bring in aid of the stipend of the curacy and freedom from house-rent at Mariton. Having run over some of the grand subjects among his pictures, and said what they had cost: "You are aware, Cowper," con-

tinued he, "that the originals of the great masters "lose no value in lying by; on the contrary, I shall "probably get more for the paintings than they "cost." Mr. Cowper, who knew nothing of this resource, and had really sought Aubrey from believing that he was completely ruined, smiled with delight at the intelligence; for, though no judge of the peculiar touches that distinguish the execution of the celebrated painters, he well knew that their works were real treasures, and readily turned to gold.

"I heartily rejoice," said he, "to hear of this; "and the more so, Aubrey, as I find you determined, "nevertheless, to take the curacy, on the subject "of which I shall write to the rector by to-morrow's "post. Had I known what you had saved from "your wreck, it is ten to one I had not taken the "liberty of forcing myself into your house."—"I "am glad you did not know it," cried Authur.—"I "am glad you did not know it," echoed the girls.—"I am equally glad, my dear young friends," said Cowper, "now that I am sensible of the happiness "I should have missed. Indeed," continued he, turning to Aubrey, "I am truly delighted with what "you have told me; but, trust my experience, you "cannot too soon discharge from this dear circle "some of the supernumerary ideas imbibed with the "milk of fortune; for habit transforms superfluities "into necessaries."—"And do you think, Mr. "Cowper," said Mrs. Aubrey, "that ideas and senti-"ments should be limited according to the state of "one's purse?"—"Only such," replied he, "as "are apt to generate wants which cannot be grati-"fied but at some expence of virtue. You will "allow, that all notions which, in their operations, "prepare remorse for the mind, should be discard-"ed."—"No doubt," said Mrs. Aubrey; "but

" surely the cultivation of taste and the improve-
" ment of knowledge can never have such a ten-
" dency."—" Where taste follows nature, and know-
" ledge is useful, they are perhaps less dangerous;
" and not at all, where a sufficient stock of good
" sense has been laid in for the guidance of con-
" duct: but how difficult is it to relinquish gratifica-
" tions for which a taste has been acquired, or to
" withdraw our mind from pleasing, though useless,
" knowledge, to fix it on more homely, yet more
" serviceable information? Confess now, that it is
" very fortunate that there is a room at Mariton
" parsonage fit for the organ to stand in; and that
" you will be able to hire a person who understands
" brewing?"—" I own, indeed," replied she, " that
" the loss of music would be dreadful."—" Oh!
" how satirical you are, Mr. Cowper!" said Emily.
—" But, as for brewing," added Arthurina, " you
" are out there; for we all like water better than
" beer."—" I like wine best," cried little Arthur-
William.—" That's honest, my boy," said Mr. Cow-
per; " and your sisters like shrubberies, carp-ponds,
" and coach-houses." There was a general laugh.
" Why, my dear girls, little as you think it, you
" have already laid out, in imagination, on the par-
" sonage and grounds, what would support the
" family handsomely for two years."—" I am sure
" I did not mean it though," said Emily.—" Nor
" I," added Arthurina.—" I know," said Emily,
" that Arthurina and I could give up every thing to
" make papa and mamma happy."—" I know then,"
said Mr. Cowper, gazing fondly at her through the
big tears that rushed to his eyes, " I know then that
" you deserve to be happy; and oh! may God Al-
" mighty watch over you, and preserve you, to form
" their happiness as long as they live!"

There was a violence in Mr. Cowper's emotion,

for which Aubrey was at a loss to account. He continued gazing at Emily; and at last gave way to a copious shower of tears. The party, ignorant of the cause, could only view him with wonder: he soon, however, wiped away his tears, and apologized for them. "It is now long since I have been so over-"come," said he, "and that you should wonder at "this sudden agitation in a stranger is natural; but, "simple as were the words Miss Aubrey used, they "touched a spring that opens the flood-gates of my "heart. 'I could give up every thing, papa, to "make you happy;' is a sentence deeply engraven "on my soul; it once gave me unmingled pleasure; "it delights me now: but, oh! the pang that ac-"companies the recollection! The pleasures and "pains of the mind are nearly allied. You will "understand me when, in telling you that I was a "father, I add that I am childless."

He stopped, and covered his face with his hands. The wonder he had caused made room for pity; and the affection he had already gained in the Aubrey family rapidly augmented. "I have, indeed, "two adopted children," said he, removing his hands, and regaining his firmness, "whom I love as "a father, and who return my love: they sooth "my life; and, though I indulge my imagination in "dwelling much on the end of it, I feel they give "a great value to the intermediate space."—"I am "truly happy to hear it," said Mrs. Aubrey; "are "they girls or boys?"—"A boy and a girl," he replied.—"How old are they, Mr. Cowper?" asked Arthur-Willliam.—"Something older than you, my "love," said Cowper: "they are about the age of "your brother and sister."—"And do they call "you pa'?"—"They do indeed, and my sister "mamma."—"La!" cried Arthur-William, "I "dare say I should love them."—"I hope," said

Emily, " that we shall often meet when we are " settled near them at Mariton."—" My dear," replied Mr. Cowper, " we do not live in that part " of the country."—" Not live at Mariton!" exclaimed the whole circle.—" But what of that," said he, " we will contrive to meet notwithstanding; " and, when you know more of us, I hope you will " not love us less."—" Come, Cowper," said Aubrey, " let us know more of you now: I long to " hear what you have been about since our youthful " days at the university. When you were here the " other morning, you gave me a kind of promise to " relate the occurrences of your life: if it is not too " late—"—" Not to-night," said Mr. Cowper: " it " is not only too late, but I must go in quest of " Edmund, whom your company had almost made " me forget."—" Is your son in town?" cried Arthur. —" Edmund Smyth is his name," said Cowper: " you shall see him before we go; but he is much " engaged."—" I wish you had brought him to- " day," said Aubrey: " will you come again to- " morrow, and bring him with you?"—" He is " peculiarly circumstanced while we remain in " town," replied Cowper: " he must make the best " use of his time while he is here; his evenings are " engaged in attending lectures. At what hour do " you breakfast?"—" Name your own hour," said Mrs. Aubrey.—" Allowing for the London division " of time," replied he, " we will be with you at ten " o'clock. Edmund must go from you soon; and, " perhaps, so must I: but, if you are disengaged in " the evening, I will return and talk about Mariton " and myself." He then took his leave of the family; who parted with him reluctantly, and sat some time talking of him and of Mariton before they parted themselves for the night.

CHAPTER XV.

A country youth—Danger of the first step in vice—A word for brown complexions, and another for fair ones.

Soon after nine next morning Aubrey, expecting Mr. Elton earlier than Mr. Cowper, repaired to the breakfast-room, where he continued reading the newspapers till he was joined by the family. They were all assembled some minutes before Mr. Cowper came; but he was punctual, and brought with him Edmund, whom he presented as his son. Aubrey and Arthur shook hands with him; and the reception he met with from Mrs. Aubrey and the girls was such as may be conceived from their prepossession in favour of Mr. Cowper.

Edmund was a fair, florid, country youth; he was taller and rather more muscular in his limbs than Arthur; the grace with which nature had endowed his person was almost entirely concealed by the fashion of his clothes, which had been made by a plain village-tailor, of cloth as coarse, but not so thread-bare, as Cowper's coat. There appeared at first a timidity in his manners, which, however, was not displeasing, as it was the effect of diffidence, and not of bashfulness: it was soon worn off by the kind and encouraging conversation of Mrs. Aubrey and the young ladies; and, long before the morning was spent, he began to speak without the preface of a blush.

Aubrey, as soon as the ceremony of introducing Edmund was over, expressed his surprise at Elton's delay. "Elton!" said Cowper, "Jack Elton! Do "you expect him to breakfast?"—"I do indeed," replied Aubrey, drawing Mr. Cowper to the window, where, while the family were talking to Edmund, he

acquainted him with the distress of the poor Winfields, and the use he had made of Sensitive's check. "I am sorry to hear it," said Mr. Cowper; "for "three hundred pounds is too much for you to lose "at present."—"To lose!" cried Aubrey.—"Jack "Elton," continued Mr. Cowper, "has been long "sinking; but, to save himself, he plunges and "catches at every thing about him. Originally a "man of some property, his first errors were the "result of mere imprudence in the management of "his affairs; he next thoughtlessly made others "subservient to his wants; and he is now systematically living upon his wits. He is a proof of the "justice of my observation to Mrs. Aubrey last "night, that ideas of elegance are dangerous in "poverty. Had he had sufficient strength of mind "to discard fictitious wants, he might by his talents "have spent his life usefully; and habit, the most "powerful moulder of nature, would have rendered "it agreeable: but now he is within the vortex of "destruction; his life is not only useless, but wicked; and it is not improbable but it may be shortened by the law. Let this, however, be between "ourselves. Your friend Sensitive is at one of the "commencing points of this deplorable route, but "he may yet be saved: his mind is not debased."—"You surprise me very much," said Aubrey; "Sensitive's fortune is large."—"It is," replied Mr. Cowper; "and, in imagination, he destines it to "noble purposes; but it will vanish suddenly be"fore he is aware of it. Not yet three-and-twenty, "he is already the victim of sensibility. It is "true he feels no diminution of his fortune; but, to "my knowledge, he has entered into large securities "for pretended friends, who will leave him at the "day of payment to answer them, and they will go "near to ruin him."—"Poor fellow! I am truly

"sorry to hear it," said Aubrey; "he deserves a "better fate."—"So did Elton," replied Mr. Cowper; "for his descent from honour to the arts of "deception was gradual. Not two years ago, he "would sooner have died than have invented this "tale of the Winfields." Aubrey stared with astonishment. "So just," continued Cowper, "is the "precept that guards us against the first seductions "of evil, be the objects ever so slight; for, as the "French proverb says, *ce n'est que le premier pas "qui coute*. When the dominions of vice are once "entered, the apprehensions which kept us out of "them vanish; crimes as we approach them, con-"trary to the laws of natural optics, decrease their "magnitude; horrors, beyond the confines of virtue, "become imperceptible; and, frequently, it is not "till the way back is lost in endless intricate devia-"tions, that we become sensible of the dreadful "progress. I trust that Sensitive may be kept "within the confines of rectitude."—"Oh! he "must! he shall!" said Aubrey, warmly.—"He "shall:" said Mr. Cowper, "if I—if the awakening "of his reasoning will effect it." Here Aubrey looked at Mr. Cowper, as if to read his character in his countenance; and he was associating some confused notions of his own situation and Sensitive's, which, before the connection was fully conceived, were dispersed by Mrs. Aubrey's calling him to the table, where the tea was already poured out.

The morning was agreeably and rationally spent. Edmund, by degrees, displayed sentiments and qualities which excited esteem and affection; and Arthur assured him, that he extremely regretted that their habitations in the country were so distant from each other. When they parted, it was with a mutual assurance of friendship; and Mr. Cowper promised to return in the evening.

After they were gone, the family all gave their opinions individually of Edmund. Emily thought him a good young man, handsome in his face, but awkward in his person. Arthurina said he was a little too sedate. Arthur-William, who had been very attentive to him when he talked of hunting, said he should like to ride his horse: and Arthur declared he was the most sensible, unaffected young man he had ever met with. Both Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey expressed themselves highly in his favour; and said that they longed to know more of the history of himself and his sister. "We shall probably have "that satisfaction to-night," said Arthur, "if Mr. "Cowper is not diverted from his intention by some "interruption."—"Oh! do, papa," cried Emily, "keep him to his word, and don't be at home to any "body." Aubrey promised both; and the family then parted for the morning: Mrs. Aubrey, the girls, and Arthur-William, went up to Mrs. Miller; and Aubrey and Arthur strolled to Mr. Flourish's room, to take a view of the pictures, and to learn what company they had attracted.

The place was still crowded when they arrived: they met several of their acquaintance, who greeted them with their usual familiarity; and Aubrey had the satisfaction to hear that the paintings were generally admired. Meeting Mr. Flourish, he consulted him on fixing the day for the sale. Mr. Flourish thought, as the town was full, that it should not be delayed above a week longer; and it was accordingly agreed that it should be advertised for that day week.

While he was speaking with the auctioneer, a stranger came up to him, and, pointing to a Madonna which Aubrey had added to his collection about two years before, wished to know if he would part with it by private agreement. Aubrey said he had no

objection, provided he could get his price for it: on which Mr. Flourish assuming his professional style, and addressing the stranger, said: "Sir, you could "not have displayed finer taste, truer judgment, "than in the choice of this piece. What a beautiful "brunette! Raphael's most charming Madonna. "His earlier Madonnas, Sir, those I mean of his mid- "dle style, are generally of a lighter and less taking "complexion. I am fully persuaded, Sir, though "some men's judgments are apt to be guided by "particular attachments, that a complete brown "beauty is really preferable to a perfect fair one: "the bright brown gives a lustre to all the other "colours, a vivacity to the eyes, and a richness to "the whole look, which one seeks in vain in the "whitest and most transparent skins. All the best "artists in the noblest age of painting, about Leo "the Tenth's time, used this deeper and richer "kind of colouring: indeed, the glaring lights intro- "duced by Guido went a great way toward the "declension of the art; as the enfeebling of the "colours by Carlo Marati has since almost com- "pleted the fall of it in Italy."

Aubrey was delighted with the science displayed by the auctioneer; but, as he had heard him descant with wonderful rhetoric on the dyes on a china bowl, he had no doubt that his eloquence was chiefly in- debted to his memory, and that he had learned much of it verbatim by heart.

"I am willing," said the stranger, "to give a "good price for it, though I am certain it is not an "original."—"Not an original! Sir," exclaimed Mr. Flourish; "I can only tell you that it cost Mr. "Aubrey seven hundred pounds." The stranger shook his head, smiled, begged pardon, and walked on. Aubrey went with Mr. Flourish towards the

door; when the latter heard his name called, but, catching no eye, did not distinguish the person.

"Flourish!" said Lord Tallboy, who spoke without removing his eyes from a Magdelen which he was scrutinizing with all the attention and gestures of a professed connoisseur, and whom a rapid glance on the surrounding taste-hunters had informed of the auctioneer's approach;—"this is a —"—"a "very fine Magdelen, my Lord," added Flourish; who now perceived the young nobleman from the continuance of his voice, and the discontinuance of his remark. "A very fine one, by G—d!" said Lord Tallboy emphatically; "it is a Magdelen plain "enough, by her tears."—"Nay, my Lord, if there "were no tears on the face," said Flourish, "you "might see, by the humid redness of the skin, "that she had been weeping extremely:—Elle "pleure jusqu'aux bouts de doigts; it weeps all "over."—"Clearly, by G—d!" returned his Lordship: "Le Brun was a famous painter of Magdelens: "this is a — a"—"Titian, my Lord."—"I know; "it is equal to his Venus, by G—d!"—Then pointing to the next picture, he continued: "What a soft, "silky skin has the artist given to that Madonna "next to it! What an exquisite complexion! that "must be one of—"—"Guido's, my Lord," added Flourish: "the colour of the complexion," continued the auctioneer, "is the most beautiful ever imagined; "it is that which Apelles gave to his famous Venus, "and which, though the picture itself be lost, Cicero "has in some degree preserved to us in his excellent "description of it. It was a fine red, beautifully "intermixed and incorporated with white, and dif-"fused in due proportion through each part of the "body. Such is often the colouring of Titian, par-"ticularly in the sleeping Venus; and such are the

" descriptions of a most beautiful skin in several of " the Roman poets *:

" Accepît vocem lacrymus Latinia matis
" Flagrantus profuso genus qui plurimus ignum
" Subjacit rubor, & violaverit ostro
" Alba rosa; tales virgo dabat ore colores †."

Arthur endeavoured in vain to follow the sense of these lines; and Aubrey was now fully convinced that Flourish spoke by rote; and that he had conned his lesson both for Raphael's bright brown, and the fine red and white of Apelles; but that his memory, as is natural, was truer to his mother-tongue than to one which he did not understand.

* Beaumont's Crito.

† Accepit vocem lacrymis Lavinia matris,
Flagrantes perfusa genas; cui plurimus ignem
Subjecit rubor, & calefacta per ora cucurrit:
Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro
Siquis ebur, aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multâ
Alba rosâ; tales dabat ore colores. Æn. 12. 69.

At this a flood of tears Lavinia shed;
A crimson blush her beauteous face o'erspread,
Varying her cheeks by turns with white and red.
The driving colours, never at a stay,
Run here and there; and flush and fade away.
Delightful change! thus Indian ivory shows,
Which with the bordering paint of purple glows;
Or lilies damask'd by the neighbouring rose.
DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XVI.

Conticuere omnes—Commencement of Mr. Cowper's history.

The day passed without a sight, or even recollection of Mr. Elton. The minds of the Aubreys were engrossed with the hopes placed on the pictures, with the thoughts of settling at Mariton, and with the expectation of Mr. Cowper, who came as he had promised. He took his chair by the corner of the fire. After some little chat about the neighbours whom the family would find in the country, observing their attention prepared for the recital of his own history, he drew a small table to him, rested his arm upon it, and began as follows:

"I know not, my friends, any better means for "opening the hearts of others, than that of opening "our own to them. It is the greatest proof we can "give of our interest in any one, to disclose our "secrets, show our faults, confess our sorrow for "them, commune on virtue, and profess affection; "therefore, having formed a plot upon the hearts "of this circle, I have the more readily determined "to make them completely acquainted with the "man who asks their love. 'A crowd is not com- "pany, faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk "but a tinkling cymbal where there is not love,' "said one well acquainted with nature: 'you may "take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the "spleen, flour of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum "for the brain, but no receipt opens the heart but "a true friend.' Aubrey, I know your opinion of "old on friendship, and experience has convinced "me that it is in a great degree a just one. That "friendship in which we impart griefs, joys, fears, "hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatever lies upon

" the heart, is almost a fable; it may have flourished " in former ages, like chivalry; but, like that, has " been long deemed Quixotism. An interchange " of kindnesses, while mutually conducive to self- " interest, is as much as can be expected in these " days. I allow all this; yet, believe me, I have " been fortunate enough to witness pure, unchange- " able friendship in one instance; and, as a second " instance, I declare to you I have participated it " myself in a degree never surpassed in reality, " scarcely to be surpassed in imagination. Form " your friendships, my dear children, where nature " dictates, at home, among yourselves; and, if you " find it elsewhere, you will have the more reason " to rejoice; but at home it is the most delightful. " I speak from experience—mine was at home. I " will not, however, anticipate.

" Having the start of you, Aubrey, I had left the " university about a year, I think, when I heard of " your marriage. I was at the time preparing to " go abroad to my father, who had left England two " years before; finding it necessary, as he pretended " to me, for his health, to live in a purer climate than " his own country afforded, and he had chosen " Oporto for his residence. The allowance he made " me was handsome; and, had he not pressed me in " a very warm manner to go to him, I should have " been contented to continue at home, for a reason " which I shall now tell you, but to which he was " then a stranger. In doing this, my dear young " friends, I make a confession of my first crime, " which, from being the greatest delight, became " the source of the greatest miseries of my life. " *Your* hearts, *your* principles are in no danger; for " you are educated in the bosoms of your parents, " where you imbibe virtues that will stand the as- " saults of all temptations; therefore, when I tell

" you that, in my childhood and youth, all I re-
" ceived of my father himself, were the usual plea-
" sures of the times and supplies of money, do not
" hate me when you hear that I deceived him."—
" What a pity!" cried Emily.—" You will think so
" still more by and by," resumed Mr. Cowper: " it
" is a pity, my love, that the nature of man is in a
" state that requires the vigilance and guidance of
" persons interested in his welfare, to keep him in
" the path of rectitude. Youth ought not to be left
" to itself, or to the care of negligent hirelings.
" The parent who does not himself frequently ex-
" amine the heart of his child, who does not season-
" ably weed out the roots of error, and sow and
" guard the seeds of virtue, has not much reason to
" complain if he find tares growing with the corn.
" In the present state of nature, evil will grow up
" with good; and he that would have the latter
" greatly preponderate in the mind of his child, must
" seasonably see the former removed. I do not,
" however, complain of my father, for he meant
" well; but certainly I was left too much to myself,
" at an age when reason cannot be mature.

" You remember, Aubrey, that I used to stay
" but little at Cambridge, and you will be surprised
" to hear that I was a husband before my name was
" entered at the university."—" I am indeed sur-
" prised," said Aubrey; " how could you, at that
" age, keep it so profound a secret?"—" I dreaded
" my father," replied Cowper: " he kept me at
" school till I was nineteen years old, for the pur-
" pose of grounding me well in the classics before I
" went to college. In the last year of my stay, I
" was one day walking with a Virgil in my hand
" through some fields, on a foot-path not much
" frequented but on market-days, leading to a vil-
" lage on the Glocester road, between three and

" four miles from Thornbury, where I was at school:
" getting over a stile, I perceived, at some distance,
" a man with his arms round the waist of a young
" woman, who was struggling to free herself from
" him. I quickened my pace, and soon came up
" with them. On observing me he quitted his hold,
" but continued to walk at her side. I concluded
" from this that they were acquainted, and I passed
" them without any scrutiny; when I suddenly felt
" myself seized by the arm, and dragged backwards:
" looking round, I found the girl clinging to me,
" and the man pulling her away. Her face was
" beautiful, and in tears. ' Oh, sir!' cried she,
" with a tremulous voice and terrified countenance,
" ' save me, I beseech you!' I instinctively said,
" ' let the girl alone.'—' Do you let her alone,'
" answered he, ' and go about your business.' On
" this I examined him from head to foot, and found
" that he had more bone than I had; but I instantly
" resolved, notwithstanding, to rescue the girl at
" the risk of a good drubbing. ' You have no more
" business to meddle with her than I have,' said I,
" ' nor so much, for she applies to me herself.'—
" ' You had better go about your business,' repeated
" he, looking sternly; ' the girl's a relation of mine,
" and I'll take care of her.' I could not help smil-
" ing. ' A relation of yours!' said I: ' Why! she
" is a country girl; and I should take you for a
" gentleman, *by your clothes.*'

" Whether irritated by the sting in this ex-
" pression, or encouraged by my appearance of
" youth, I know not, but, still holding the girl with
" his left hand, he aimed a blow at me with his
" right, which I fortunately parried, and returned
" so earnestly, that, to defend himself, he was under
" the necessity of letting the object of the contest
" go. She immediately took to her heels, and was

" probably out of sight in a minute; but I was too
" seriously engaged to follow her with my eyes.
" The assailant and I were now front to front, and
" a desperate battle ensued. Neither of us was a
" skilful combatant, and his strength was certainly
" superior to mine; yet not so much but that I kept
" him in play a considerable time: from want of
" knowledge in the noble art of pugilism, heavy
" blows were mutually received, and blood and
" bruises were exchanged. At length, finding that
" I began to be exhausted, I resolved to make a last
" powerful effort for the victory; and, collecting all
" my force, I took an aim with my fist at his chest,
" and, with a joint impetus, threw my head into his
" face. He fastened his hands about me, and, cling-
" ing as he reeled, fell, and pulled me along with
" him. In the struggle to disengage myself, my
" arm got into an awkward position, and the bone
" snapped as we came to the ground. In this state
" I believe he would have murdered me, had he not,
" as he rose, heard the hollooing of people ap-
" proaching in the adjoining field; on which he gave
" me a severe kick on my side, which I sometimes
" feel to this day, and made off as fast as he could.
" He was over the one stile some minutes before the
" persons whose voices had alarmed him appeared
" at the other. I lay on the ground, quite exhausted,
" when they came up to me. The girl herself
" whom I had rescued was foremost. Perceiving
" me from the stile, she shrieked, left the others,
" and running forward, dropped breathless at my
" side. We were soon surrounded by a group of
" men and women, armed with sticks and pitchforks.
" I told them that my antagonist could hardly be
" out of the next field; on which some of them set
" off after him: very fortunately for him, he out-
" stripped them.

" In the mean time, I raised myself to a sitting " posture, and laid my broken arm on my knee. " The innocent cause of my disaster soon recovered, " and, as she looked at me with eyes of grateful in- " quiry, I could not, in spite of the pain I suffered, " help admiring the beauty of her face. The contour " was oval, the features prominent, her nose was " aquiline, her mouth a perfect rose-bud, her com- " plexion an exquisite mixture of white and red, a " little tanned, the colour of her eyes a deep blue, " that of her hair a light brown, and it waved in " natural ringlets about her forehead, which was " shaded by a modest bonnet. Nature had been " equally bountiful to her person: she was slender, " above the middle size, and, though her coarse " russet gown marked the rustic, her form possessed " those native, simple graces, which art may im- " prove, but cannot give. At that time I admired " beauty as it struck my eye, without thinking of " the nature and causes of it; but I have since re- " flected with more judgment on the reason of the " impression it then made on my heart as well as " on my eye. Fanny's beauty ——

Here Mr. Cowper paused: he rose, walked to the end of the room, shed some tears to memory, wiped them from his cheeks, returned, and resumed his story. The Aubreys were kept silent by the sympathy produced by his distress. He proceeded without taking notice of the moisture which glistened in their eyes.

" Her name was Fanny Ross. Fanny's beauty " at that time made its impression by the emanation " of soul which appeared in her eyes, on her lips, in " her attitudes. The noble and virtuous passions " are the grand source of grace, of that grace that " creates love; for a certain degree of grace may be " attendant on the mere motion of the limbs and of

" the muscles in the face; but it is the internal " amiable movements, it is the fine emotions of the " soul, which, expanding on the surface of the human " form, bestow upon it the grace that captivates the " heart. Fanny's countenance and attitude, which " made me forget my broken arm, beamed with an " emotion—oh! I remember it but too well," said he, raising his shoulders, and pressing his temples towards each other with a hand that covered his eyes:—" an emotion," continued he, " the best " adapted to win affection, as it is the effect of one " of the most pleasing virtues of thinking beings. " Though my face was bloody and disfigured, and " might have excited horror, Fanny's eyes and lips, " and posture, were governed by GRATITUDE: it " was mingled with much anguish, and a consider- " able degree of silent self-reproach; and the mean- " ness of her rustic vestments were lost in the radi- " ance of the united emotions." Here Mrs. Aubrey smiled. " I see," said he, " you think that, " though my knowledge is improved, my description " is better suited to my age at the time of the event, " than to my present years; but so it is, my dear " Mrs. Aubrey, I never can speak of it without " ardour.

" On reviving, she stood up, her hands clasped, " her head a little on one side and bent forward. " To relieve her, I made light of the state I was in, " and telling her with a smile that I should be very " well when I had washed my face with a little fresh " water, desired her to go and bring me some. I " said this to spare her the grief of knowing that " my arm was broken; and she flew to obey me. I " then told the fact to the people about me, and re- " quested that one of the men would accompany me " to Thornbury. I had nearly three miles to walk. " The good folks raised me on my legs; and one of

" the women having made me a sling with a large
" neck handkerchief, and put my arm into it, they
" all went with me through the fields as far as the
" high-road, where I was taking leave of them, when
" I saw Fanny getting over the opposite stile; upon
" which I resolved to wait till she came up. In her
" hands she had a wooden bowl and a bottle of
" water, and from her pocket she took a clean white
" towel and a piece of soap. At sight of the sling
" she turned pale; and, when I told her that I could
" not wash my face, her tears ran down her cheeks,
" and she asked me to allow her to do it. I said I
" could make a better use of the water, and, taking
" the bottle from her, I put it to my mouth, and
" drank a good draught of it. This revived me
" very much; I assured her it did; and then pressed
" her to return to the village with the good people
" whom she had brought to my assistance. She
" answered with a fresh shower of tears; while the
" villagers blessed me. One of them accompanied
" me; and the rest, with Fanny, returned home.

" Being refreshed by the water, I walked on with
" less difficulty. I leave you to imagine the bustle
" at the school when I arrived. The surgeon was
" immediately brought, and declared the fracture to
" be a simple one. Having set the bone, he ordered
" me to keep my room, to which I was confined a
" full fortnight. When the cause of my battle was
" known, it gained me great credit, not only in the
" house, but throughout the town.

" One morning in the second week of my confine-
" ment, the chambermaid, who had before paid me
" some compliments as she put the room to rights,
" said to me with a smile: 'La! master Cowper,
" what a very pretty girl that is you fought for.' I
" asked her how she knew? 'I can't but know,'
" replied she, 'when I have seen her every day,

" every day, since you have been ill.' I was delighted " with this new proof of the girl's goodness; and, " to confess the truth, she ran very much in my " head; for, as the chambermaid might have said, I " thought of her every day, every day.

" ' Has she really called every day?' said I.— " ' She has indeed, Master Cowper,' replied Betty, " ' till yesterday, and then she sent a man.' I beg- " ged the maid, if he came the next day, to let me " see him, which she promised to do. My inten- " tion was to make some inquiries respecting the " beautiful rustic, and the person who insulted her; " and I was impatient for the next day's call. Betty " was true to her word; and, about ten o'clock, in- " troduced into my room the man who had accom- " panied me home on the day of the combat, and with " whom the pain I suffered had prevented my con- " versing. The villager was a middle-aged man, " of a pleasing aspect, with rustic, but agreeable " manners. After expressing his own satisfaction " at the progress of my recovery, he assured me " that I had been the talk of the village of Melford " ever since I had been Fanny Ross's friend against " the ruffian who had attacked her in the field.

" In talking with this countryman, I learned that " Fanny was the only child of a small farmer, who, " after a laborious life, had begun to lay something " by, when he was suddenly cut off from all the cares " of this world; that he left no property of any va- " lue behind him; but that, having subscribed to a " tontine for his wife and daughter, they had annui- " ties, amounting together to thirty pounds; that " the widow and her daughter lived in a cottage in " Melford, where, by raising poultry, and taking in " plain work, they almost doubled their annuity, " and were beloved by all the neighbours. ' As for " that there villain who affronted Fanny,' said he,

" 'nobody knows unny thing about 'un, where he " went to, or where he come from. That there day " was the first time she ever seed 'un in her whole " life.'

" This," continued Mr. Cowper, " is a very ex- " traordinary circumstance; he never was heard of " before nor since. He was apparently a genteel " young man, and very little older than myself; " but I do not know that I should have recognized " him had I met him again; for I was more parti- " cular in tracing the muscles of his limbs than his " features, and the whole business was so agitated " and short, that it is no wonder if the impression " of his fists superseded the impression of his fea- " tures on my eyes. In a different place, and after " a short lapse of time, I could not have identified " him. Having satisfied myself as far as the inform- " ation of my visitor extended, I dismissed him " with my thanks, desiring him to tell Fanny that, " as I was now so well, she must not give herself " the trouble of sending or coming to inquire for " my health; and to assure her that she need not be " sorry for what I had suffered, as that was past; " and that the remembrance of the service I had " done her would always be extremely pleasing to " me."

Here Mr. Cowper pausing to drink a glass of water, the young folks made some remarks on what he had related. " Dear!" said Emily, " I pity poor " Fanny; for I should have been so unhappy my- " self if I had been the cause of the breaking of " your arm."—" I wonder," said Arthurina, " what " became of the villain!"—" I dare say," observed Arthur, " that he was hanged afterwards for some " crime or other."—" I think," cried Arthur-William, " what a nice blow it was Mr. Cowper gave him " with his head. O! how I should have liked to

" pounce him for pretty Fanny Ross!"—Mrs. Aubrey observed how clearly the interposition of Providence sometimes appeared.—" It does," said Mr. Cowper, with a sigh; " but then, alas! at other " times, how unaccountable!"—" True, my friend," replied Aubrey; " but we should probably be no " gainers were the veil constantly removed; we " should have to look no farther than this life for an " explanation of the moral system. It seems to be " the summit of a wise benevolence in our present " state to give sufficient indications of a superin- " tending Providence, yet to leave such obscurity " as to compel us to place our chief hope on an- " other world."

CHAPTER XVII.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's history.

" I HOPE you were quite well at the end of the " fortnight," said Emily to Mr. Cowper; who smiled at the hint of impatience, and resumed his narrative. " In about a fortnight I thought myself per- " fectly well; but, though I was allowed to take ex- " ercise in the air, I was ordered to let it be gentle, " and to keep my arm in a sling. It has been observed, " that he who has once put a plant into the earth, " takes delight in watering it, in attending to it, in " rearing it: so with the heart; the first kindness or " service rendered to a worthy object, though gra- " tuitous, induces repetition, and an interest in his " welfare becomes naturally a gratification of the " soul. The service I had rendered Fanny Ross " endeared her to me; I felt anxious about her; " and the first use I made of my liberty was to

" walk over to Melford, where I soon found the " cottage in which she and her mother lived.

" It stood alone on an elevated green, near a " pretty brook, called the Mel. It was shaded by " two large walnut trees and a wild cherry: a little " up the brook was a rustic bridge, beneath which " the stream fell in a beautiful silver sheet over a " rock, which seemed thrown by nature in its way " to embellish the prospect; it was a fine object from " the village: the inhabitants had dammed the banks " on each side even with it, to prevent the water " passing round; and, to heighten the beauty, they " had bent over it a tree growing on the bank; and, " without spoiling the look of the uneven arch " formed by it, had contrived to place a board, for " a passage. On the farther side of the brook, " there was a variety of trees, some small, some ma- " jestic, planted for shades in the undulating pas- " tures of the rich *dairyists* of Glocestershire; and " to a great distance the eye was feasted with the " view of numerous herds of sleek kine. The vil- " lage stood on a gentle slope down the stream, " which meandered from it, leaving it gradually on " an eminence to the right. It was a kind of " straggling street, of which the cottages, though " built in the common way, had a certain superior " air of neatness that bespoke a greater degree of " comfort reigning within them than is usually found " in the labouring class of men. At the bottom, " but at a little distance from the street, was the " church and vicarage-house: the latter, though un- " inhabited, was commodious; the former was in the " Gothic style. From the end of the village, the " cart-way ran along the side of a woody acclivity, " and, about a mile off, crossed the stream, which, " after a serpentine course through the valley, inter-

" sected the road, and followed the curve of the " hill."

" What a beautiful picture have you drawn!" said Mrs. Aubrey.—" I have been the more parti- " cular in describing it," resumed Mr. Cowper, " as I shall have to speak more of it hereafter. " Though I have now painted it to you, I did not " stop long at the time to survey it, but immediate- " ly went into Dame Ross's cottage, which was by " far the largest and best in the village. Both " mother and daughter were at home: the former " being told who I was, became very warm in her " acknowledgments, and blessed me again and again; " but what a difference was there in Fanny! her " countenance no longer bore that ardent solicitude, " no longer were her hands clasped in that ecstasy " of mingled gratitude and anguish that had im- " pressed her image on my mind, and led my fancy " to form a thousand romantic plans for her good: " cold, distant, and reserved, she scarcely raised " her eyes towards me; and when, following her " mother's example, she said she was glad to see " me well, the blood rushed to her face as if she had " committed a crime. I felt at that moment a new " sensation, which I certainly did not bring to the " cottage with me; and, though I could not account " for it, this coldness and reserve awakened in me " an anxiety to which till that moment I was a " stranger. Though a cottager, and under a consi- " derable obligation to me, I dreaded the loss of " her esteem, and I would have gladly broken my " arm again for such another look as it had procur- " ed me before. No, it was not to be my lot; Fanny " was coldly grateful, respectful, and grave. I made " several attempts, by kind speeches, to put her at " her ease and obtain a smile, but in vain; she main-

" tained the same demeanour while I remained. As " I left the cottage, however, I observed tears start " to her eyes; and I was perplexed the more to ac- " count for her behaviour. In my way back to " Thornbury, she entirely occupied my thoughts, " and became afterwards almost the constant sub- " ject of them.

" Having been brought up altogether at a school, " the instructions I received related chiefly to clas- " sical knowledge; for, at these academies, all real " knowledge of things, of society, of the passions, " virtues, vices, and general nature of man, is, as " you know, left to be collaterally picked up how " one can. Without thinking of love or marriage, " or the difference of situations in life, I was, while " a school-boy, in love with Fanny Ross. As I was " not thought to be in any danger from the breaking " of my arm, it had not been deemed necessary to " inform my father of it till I was able to go out, " and then I wrote to him myself about it, a few " days before I took my walk to Melford. When I " returned to the school, I found a kind, affectionate " answer from him, in which he told me that my " master had pronounced me sufficiently prepared " to change from the school to the university; and " that a friend of his, then at Bristol, would in a " few days call for me, and bring me up to town " with him. This intelligence, which three weeks " before would have been the most pleasing I could " receive, now filled me with consternation. I was " wretched at the thought of never more seeing " Fanny Ross. I walked towards Melford the very " next day; but, as I approached the village, I re- " collected the solemnity of my reception the day " before, and was deterred from proceeding to the " cottage. The same recollection kept me in a state " of irresolution till my father's friend arrived, and

" I quitted the country without another sight of " Fanny.

" My father received me with great affection; " but he was not of a communicative disposition on " any subject, and least of all on his affairs. He " lived with some splendour, possessing a consider- " able fortune, chiefly personal. My mother had " been dead some years, leaving him a widower with " two children, my sister and myself. He told me " that having had from my master an excellent cha- " racter of me, he would not confine me with a tu- " tor at the university; but that I should myself " make my choice of the assistance I might want in " the pursuit of my studies; that, to enable me to " provide myself with whatever was necessary to " complete them, and at the same time to live like " a gentleman, my allowance should be liberal, that " it should be four hundred a-year; and, if that did " not suffice, he would make it five: all he request- " ed was that I should be strictly just in all dealings, " and form rich and respectable connexions; hint- " ing that, with a good person, manners, liberal ex- " pences, and conduct, I might look high among " the daughters of wealth and rank for a wife. " When he mentioned Cambridge to me, I express- " ed a preference for Oxford; because I reflected " on its being so much nearer to Melford: but, " for a reason which he did not then tell me, and " which I afterwards learned was his sometimes living " incognito himself in the neighbourhood of the " latter, he made it a point with me to go to Cam- " bridge.

" Having filled my pockets with money, he ad- " vised me, before I went to the university, to go " and pay a visit to my sister, who was at his coun- " try-house near Reading, with an elderly lady, a " distant relation, who, since my mother's death,

" had kept my father's house, and under whose pro-
" tection my sister had received her education from
" proper persons. This I was happy to do, as I
" longed to see my sister; and accordingly, after
" spending some days with him, I took leave of him
" and set out for Reading. I loved my sister; but,
" to tell the truth, I thought on the way only of
" Fanny Ross, and it came into my head to divide
" my visit between them. I staid three days in
" Berkshire; and then, pretending a wish to see an
" old schoolfellow who lived near Marlborough, I
" set out unattended across the country, and, avoid-
" ing Thornbury, I went by a circuitous route to
" Berkley, where I took up my quarters. On the
" very day of my arrival, an incident occurred really
" worthy of a romance, and, if I had but a book in
" my hand, you might think I was reading you a
" novel.

" After refreshing myself at the inn, I set out
" with the design of walking to Melford, which is
" but two miles farther from Berkley, across the
" fields, than it is from Thornbury. About half-
" way, at a little distance from me, on the foot-
" track, I observed something which, as I ap-
" proached it, looked like a book; and guess my
" surprise, on taking it up, to find it my own Vir-
" gil, which I lost on the day I fought for Fanny
" Ross, and which I had never thought of after.
" What astonished me was the neat case it had got,
" and the high state of preservation it was in. Open-
" ing it, I found my name thus written by myself,
" *E libris Caroli Cowper;* and beneath this appear-
" ed, new to me, and in a hand less free, *Charles*
" *Cowper, his book; God bless him.* I was sitting
" on a stile, examining the leaf, when the sound of
" some one approaching attracted my notice: I look-
" ed towards Melford, and saw a young woman,

" whom I soon perceived to be Fanny, in the same " dress she had on, the day I first saw her.

" Unwilling that she should know me till she was " quite close, I slipped off the stile, and walked " slowly along the cross-hedge with the Virgil in my " hand. I had made but a very few paces, when " running, and out of breath, she was at my heels. —" ' That's my book, Sir,' cried she, panting vio- " lently.—' And do you read Latin, Fanny?' said I, " turning round. I cannot give you an adequate " idea of her face and form when she recognized " me. Surprise rushed into her countenance; she " continued panting, and was turning to fly away. " This I caught her in time to prevent. ' Sure you " don't know me, Fanny,' said I, ' or you would " not run from me.' This remark restored her re- " collection, and I saw that it told her she had be- " trayed herself. She cast her eyes to the ground, " a slight blush tinged her forehead; on her *cheek* a " slight blush could not be seen; a smile, half forced, " half natural, displayed her beautiful teeth; she " handled the flounce of her apron, and, dropping a " curtesy with something more of grace than rus- " tics usually do, said: ' Bless me! who should have " thought of seeing you here, Mr. Cowper? I heard " you were gone from Thornbury long ago.'—' Yes,' " said I, ' I went away; but I am come back on " purpose to see you, Fanny.'—' Bless me, Mr. " Cowper,' cried she, ' how can you say so!'—' I " should have come to see you again before I went " away,' said I, ' only you did not appear glad to " see me the time I did come. Why was not you " glad to see me?'—' Indeed,' replied she, ' I was " glad, but —'—' But what, Fanny?'—' Pray don't " ask me,' said she: ' you know you are a gentle- " man; and so Dick Cowsel's father, one of our " neighbours, told my mother; and that I should

" not go to Thornbury myself to ask after your arm ;
" and that it was not proper for a young woman to
" be too thankful to a gentleman: but I can't for
" my soul see why a poor girl should not be as grate-
" ful as any body else ; and, to say the truth, I think
" I have more learning than Dick Cowsel's father,
" though he is a very good man ; and I know he had
" a spite at me for refusing Dick last Thornbury
" fair, and said I was proud, because I had been
" told that I had gentle blood in my veins; for they
" say that my father's father's father was a gentle-
" man, yes indeed, and came from the North; and that
" it was through honest misfortunes that our family
" fell away, and was obliged to work: yes, indeed,
" and my own father used to speak as if he was a
" gentleman, and yet he was not proud. No more
" am I, I assure you; for, after all, what is blood
" but blood? and it is the heart, and not the blood,
" which makes people better or worse.'

" This genuine simplicity, this nobleness of na-
" ture alone, would have won my heart, but former
" events had already captivated me, and, to know
" that Fanny's coldness and reserve had been the
" result of compulsion, gave me unspeakable plea-
" sure. ' You are right, Fanny,' said I, ' one good
" heart is worth more than a thousand empty
" names; and such a girl as you more than all the
" artificial babies that fashion can produce.'—' Dear
" me, Mr. Cowper,' cried she, ' I did not think
" you would banter me so.'—' I do not banter you:
" but tell me, Fanny,' said I, pointing to the name
" that had been written on the leaf of my Virgil
" after I lost it, ' did you write this?' She blushed
" and hesitated. ' Perhaps,' continued I, ' you
" got Dick Cowsel to write it.'—' Dick Cowsel!'
" cried she, laughing:—it was the first time I had
" seen her laugh ; and I saw that nature had en-

" dowed her cheerful emotions with as much grace
" as her mournful ones.—' Dick Cowsel! if I could
" not have done it myself, I should never have
" thought of asking Dick Cowsel: Dick's no scho-
" lar; but he is a very good young man though.'
" —' And not a bit the worse,' said I, ' for loving
" you: but, if you wrote this with your own hand,
" Fanny, I hope you mean to be as good as your
" word, and not to pray without meaning; what
" you pray for you can give.'

" Fanny did not exactly understand me; she
" looked confounded; a slight frown brought the
" inner points of her eye-brows a little nearer to
" each other. She seemed to recollect her situa-
" tion. ' Dear me!' she exclaimed, ' what am I
" about? I should be at home by this!'—' Won't
" you answer me?' said I.—' Sir!'—Oh! how inde-
" pendent of fortune and of rank is the dignity of
" virtue! all things else they may embellish and
" ennoble; but virtue carries its inherent nobility
" into every bosom, wherever found, and is as glo-
" rious in the peasant as in the prince. Fanny's mo-
" nosyllable possessed the dignity of virtue; it was
" sufficiently emphatic, without being bold. Im-
" pressed with notions of the difference of situation,
" her humility led her to imagine that virtuous love
" was not to be expected from a gentleman. I im-
" mediately undeceived her. ' Can you,' cried I,
" ' suspect for a moment that, after saving, I would
" destroy you? It would be asking a curse, Fanny,
" not a blessing. The way to bless me is to be my
" wife.'—' What!' cried she, ' your virtuous wife!
" Oh, no, I can never hope for that!' I had some
" difficulty to convince her that I was serious; but
" at last, in the innocence of her heart, she con-
" fessed that I had been constantly in her thoughts;
" that she had found and secreted my Virgil for

" love of me ; and that she could conceive no happi-
" ness whatever equal to that of being my wife.

" Notwithstanding this, I saw a degree of com-
" punction poisoning her pleasure, in the comparative
" tive view she took of our situations, and of her
" own defective education. With respect to the for-
" mer, I put her in mind of her own reasoning, and
" persuaded her that happiness was the result of
" love and virtue, without reference to rank; and as
" for the latter, I told her, that I would undertake
" in a short time to put her upon a par with the
" best-educated of her sex, and that no employ-
" ment on earth could be so delightful to me. ' Dear
" me !' exclaimed the innocent, lovely girl, ' how
" happy we might be in reading and learning all day
" long! and then, as to the matter of gentility, I
" know, I am sure, if you could find out, that I
" come of a very good family. Isn't there a great
" house in London where every body's family is
" wrote down in big rolls of paper and large books
" with painted arms ? I remember hearing my father
" say that my grandfather told him that our family
" was there.'—I made her happy by saying, that I
" would inquire when I went to town: but that,
" whether it was or was not so, I did not care ; for
" that, in my opinion, a virtuous woman was far
" above rubies.—' Dear me!' said she, ' that's a
" verse in the Proverbs of Solomon; it is in the
" last chapter ; I can say from that verse to the
" end by heart; shall I say it to you?'—' Do,' re-
" plied I, ' and let us walk on towards Melford.'
" Her heart fluttered with delight at the opportu-
" nity she found to convince me that she had some
" learning; and beginning with, ' Who can find a
" virtuous woman, for her price is above rubies,'
" she repeated to the end of the chapter, blushing,
" and watching, in frequent glances, the approba-

" tion of my countenance. When she had done,
" I could not help throwing my arms round her and
" kissing her; at which she grew angry, and said,
" ' Now, don't you do that again, Mr. Cowper, un-
" less you want to quarrel with me.' I assured her
" I would not: ' but, Fanny,' said I, ' what you
" have been repeating is both family and for-
" tune to you; and, if you will promise to be my
" wife, you will make me happy.' Her answer was,
" that I must ask her mother; for, as to what she
" herself would do, it was as plain as if she had
" spoken it.

" I see, my kind friends," said Mr. Cowper, in-
terrupting his narrative, " that you are not tired of
" my circumstantial detail: I rejoice at it; for, in
" recalling these events of my life, I feel myself im-
" pelled to dwell upon them with a minuteness ap-
" proaching to their reality: but I must, however,
" be more brief, or I shall have to postpone the rest
" of my story till we meet at Mariton, as I have so
" little time left me in town.

" Fanny," continued he, " having innocently and
" undesignedly shown me how favourable her heart
" was to me, I made use of it to obviate all her ob-
" jections, and to prevail upon her to assist me in
" accomplishing our union, in which less difficulty
" occurred than I feared; for I conceived that her
" mother would require my father's consent, and
" pique Fanny's pride into a resolution not to marry
" without it. In this, however, I was mistaken:
" the old lady had, indeed, discovered her daugh-
" ter's inclination while I was confined at Thorn-
" bury by my broken arm; and, having consulted her
" neighbour Cowsel, had prevented her continuing
" to call daily, and had given her the lesson of re-
" serve which she had practised at the visit I made
" them; but this had only been in consequence of

" her not conceiving it possible that I could return " her love honourably, and she was very anxious " for the preservation of her daughter's innocence " and happiness.

" Giving Fanny her Virgil, I sent her on to tell " her mother what had passed between us; and I " determined to go and talk to her neighbour Cow- " sel myself. Though she called Cowsel her neigh- " bour, he lived full half a mile from her up the river, " and rented some acres of pasturage, on which " he had a few cows, that supplied his dairy; and " Cowsel, in a small way, was a thriving man. On " entering his house, I was agreeably surprised to " find myself received by the old man with a smile. " 'Walk in, Mr. Cowper,' said he, 'walk in; I be " quite alone: my dame, with Dick and Susan, be " all gone to Thornbury the-day; but they 'ull be " back by and by. I be glad to see you, and al- " ways shall; for I love a good action to my soul, " and I have loved you ever sin' you fought for " Fanny Ross. But I thought you was gone, Mas- " ter Cowper, I thought you was gone. What " brings you again into these parts?'—Glad of so " fortunate an opportunity of unburdening my mind, " I immediately answered him with a question to " the point: 'Can't you guess, farmer?'—'Hum! " I don't like to guess,' replied Cowsel; 'I have " too much respect for you to guess the only thing " that could lessen it; the only thing I can think of " that could bring you from London to Melford.' " —'Though I am sure you have guessed very right, " farmer,' said I, 'yet I hope you won't like me " the worse. Would you have me be a stock or a " stone, without feeling?'—'I would have you be " an honourable man, young gentleman,' replied " he; 'and, let me tell you, that won't be, if what " I guess be right.'—'Come, my good friend,' said

" I, ' don't let Fanny's refusal of Dick prejudice " you against me.'—' Her refusal of Dick prejudice " me!' cried Cowsel; ' why, you don't know me, " Master Cowper: I let Dick, poor toad, ask her " the question, to satisfy hisself; but, Lord bless " your heart! Fanny Ross be fitter for a squire than " for Dick. Besides, my boy had only neighbour's " fare: why, she has refused all the young men in " the parish; and, to tell you my mind, that's the " only thing I dislike in Fanny: she is as proud as " Lucifer; I mean as to a husband; for, as to " every thing else, nobody can be more humble. " As for refusing Dick, she was in the right; I " knew she would: but, when she goes to refuse " men of property, as I know she has, confound " her pride; I think she be mad, to prefer twiddling " and twisting her fingers to make lace.'

" I need not tell you how delighted I was at this " account of Fanny. ' By Heaven! Cowsel,' cried " I, ' she is the most beautiful creature I ever saw.' " —' She be,' replied he; ' I allow it: but remem- " ber this, Master Cowper, you have rendered her " a service; and, if you take advantage of it to in- " jure her —' —' I injure her! farmer,' exclaimed " I.—' No, no,' continued he, ' I don't think you " would designedly: but, any how, it would be " such a sin, I should hate you as much as I love " and respect you now.'—' Farmer,' said I, warmly, " ' give me your hand; and, if ever I injure her, " may God forsake me!'—' Said like yourself,' " cried he, shaking my hand heartily; ' said like the " protector of innocence: but now, my worthy " young gentleman, take an old man's advice in " this matter. I see you would not willingly bite " at the Devil's hook; but don't you now, don't " you trust yourself to nibble at the bait: take my " advice, I say; to the right about wheel; go back

" to London, and forget Fanny Ross.'—' Forget
" Fanny Ross!' I exclaimed, ' I must first forget to
" see, to hear, to feel, to breathe: tell me, farmer,
" to forget all the functions of life, but not to for-
" get Fanny Ross!'

" Cowsel looked grave and was silent; but when
" I opened my mind to him, which I immediately
" did, he smiled, and told me I was too good for
" this world. ' Fanny,' said he, ' deserves you,
" and I should be happy to see her your wife; but
" what will your friends say?'—' Farmer,' replied
" I, ' as they don't know Fanny Ross so well as you
" and I do, I don't mean to ask them till, say
" what they will, they can't part us. When we are
" married, they will find out her worth; but, if I
" say a word before-hand, they will call me mad,
" and my Fanny mean.'—' They may be mistaken
" though,' said Cowsel; ' for the girl, for aught I
" know, is as well born as yourself. I knew her poor
" father; an industrious, broken-hearted creature,
" that laid by all his little scrapings together to
" teach his daughter reading and writing, and buy
" an annuity for her and her mother, in case of his
" death; for he always said he should not live long.
" Master Cowper, I am not for levelling distinc-
" tions; but this I must say, that if I was the first
" lord in the land, and you was my own and only
" son, you should have my full consent to marry
" Fanny; for I know her, I know every string of
" her heart, and I know she would make the man
" she marries happy, be his station what it might.'

" Finding in Cowsel sentiments like these, it was
" not difficult for me to make him my friend; but I
" was afraid of Dick, as I could hardly hope to
" make a friend of a rival. His father, however,
" put me at my ease, by telling me that his son's
" heart was not made of stuff to be broke; but that,

" like the rest of Fanny's lovers, he had, on rejec-
" tion, directed the ardour of his passion to an-
" other object, with whom he was likely to be more
" successful. By convincing Cowsel of my disin-
" terested and honourable views, I completely won
" his affection. He confessed he had warned her
" mother against me, and had been the cause of
" Fanny's not continuing her enquiries for me at
" Thornbury; but that he would now be my friend
" with the old woman. ' Yet,' said he, ' there is
" one thing to be considered; you mayn't be inde-
" pendent of your friends; and, if they should be
" so displeased as to forsake you, how will you
" maintain a family?'—' They will never forsake
" me,' said I, ' for marrying Fanny Ross; but I
" have even thought how to provide against that.
" I have no ambition to be great: before I disclose
" my marriage I will, out of my income, put a suf-
" ficient sum into your hands to stock a good range
" of pasture; from you I will learn the care of
" cattle; and my Fanny and I will make cheese
" enough to feed all our little ones, and as many
" more.'—' God's blessing on you!' said he, smil-
" ing; ' it cheers my heart to hear you talk so
" wisely. It is such a youth as you that ought to
" be the husband of Fanny Ross; and her husband
" you shall be.'

" I lost no time in improving the fortunate im-
" pression I had made on the farmer's mind, but
" begged him to go with me immediately to her
" mother. We found our work already half done
" by the representations of her daughter; and Cowsel
" repeating my proposal and my plan, accompanied
" with his own hearty approbation, the prelimina-
" ries were soon settled. The banns were to be re-
" gularly published at the parish church; and that
" I might, as to residence, comply with the requi-

" sition of the law, Cowsel offered me a room in " his house. This offer, you will believe, I readily " accepted, and promised to become his inmate in " the course of the week. I then took my leave, " hastened to Berkley, threw myself into a post- " chaise, and was in London early next day. My " point was to obtain my father's permission to " spend a month before I went to Cambridge with " my friend at Marlborough, Ned Neville; you re- " member him at Cambridge, Aubrey? and it was " no sooner asked than granted. He made me an " offer of one of his servants; but I declined it, " saying, I preferred hiring one in the country. I " packed up clothes and every thing which I " thought I should want: nor did I forget books, " maps, paper, pens, pencils, a good microscope, " and several other optical instruments. I staid but " one day in town, the next I spent in Berkshire " with my sister, and the day following with my " friend in Wiltshire. Knowing I could depend " upon him, I made him my confident, and settled " the channel of all correspondence and communi- " cation through his hands, so that there was no " danger of my plan being detected. I then once " more took my circuitous route to Berkley; and, " after an absence of five days, found myself most " delightfully settled in a pleasant room, at the " house of the friendly farmer."

Here Mr. Cowper pausing, Aubrey took the opportunity of ringing the bell, to order some refreshments; and, while Cæsar was gone for sweetmeats, cakes, and wine, Mr. Cowper desisted from his narrative, leaving an interval which the party filled up with observations on Fanny Ross's beauty and character, and on the picturesque scenery of her native village.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's history.

After a few minutes devoted to the repast brought by Cæsar, Mr. Cowper proceeded thus: "You "have been very good to me, my friends; for, I "confess, that, instead of remarks of the nature "you have bestowed on my story, I expected some "reflections on the duplicity of my conduct towards "an indulgent father."—"I think," said Aubrey, "that your own reflections at the beginning were "sufficient to avert all severity of censure."—"It "left us nothing to say against you, Mr. Cowper," said Arthur: "I am sure you would never have de-"ceived him, if he had been your friend as well "as your father."—"You are right, my dear boy," said Mr. Cowper; "I should have been as inca-"pable of veiling my heart from him, as you from "your father; and, in meditating on my life, I am "less severe on myself for a breach of filial confi-"dence, than for the act of duplicity itself; all deceit, "all hypocrisy, are offences of the blackest dye "against the pure, grand Source of Truth. I early "became so sensible of this, that the slightest want "of candour appeared to me the chief badge by "which we might distinguish those vicious spirits "that are under the dominion of the Father of "Falsehood: but it was not till I had severely felt "the effects of it that I became alive to the horror "with which it has ever since inspired me. I will "not preach candour to you, my dear children, for "you need no sermon on the subject; but, as you "advance in life, you will invariably observe disin-"genuousness to be the cement of misery and vice. "To go on with my story:

" My friendly farmer had employed the time of " my absence not only in interesting his own family, " but the whole parish in Fanny's happiness and " mine; and, to complete the acquisition of their " good will, I went among the neighbours, and made " myself as agreeable to them as I possibly could; " so that, when our names were proclaimed on " the ensuing Sunday, the publication was heard " throughout the congregation without surprise. " As to the clergyman; you must know, that the " vicar of Melford having been for some time in a " very precarious state of health, had, by the ad- " vice of his physicians, gone on a voyage to a " southern climate; and the curate who performed " the duty of the parish was a young man, " whose father lived at Berkley, and with whom, " on a principle of frugality, he chose to reside. " He did not know half of the parishioners; and the " names of Charles Cowper and Frances Ross passed " his lips with as much indifference as those of John " Doe and Richard Roe issue from the mouth of a " lawyer.

" Every thing seemed to favour our union; and, " as I already looked upon Fanny as my wife, I " made the most of the intervening weeks in culti- " vating her ideas and talents: I considered her as " a beautiful, unclassed wild-flower, that I was " transplanting into the garden of MIND; and no " florist ever took such delight in varying the " streaks of his tulip, or in multiplying and enrich- " ing the petals of his carnation, as I in expanding " the knowledge and cultivating the understanding " of my intellectual blossom. To teach those we " love is a passion natural to the human breast; it " is strongest in young minds, and even children " we see possess it. I had learned much, and I had " a great deal to learn; but I was sufficiently ad-

" vanced to be Fanny's tutor; and, were I to re-
" commend an improvement in the art of making
" love, it would be that it should commence with
" the lover's being the tutor of his mistress in the
" rudiments of some of the sciences.

" Before our probationary weeks elapsed, my
" lovely pupil read the Spectator fluently, and sel-
" dom failed in the orthography of common words;
" but then, remember she had learned to read and
" write before. Nor did she alone profit by my af-
" fection for her: for the sake of prudent appear-
" ances, as well as friendship, Susan Cowsel was very
" often, if not always, with us; and Susan im-
" proved by my lectures: Susan was a good girl, and
" afterwards married and settled well. Her brother
" Dick and I soon became friends; and Dick too, I
" flatter myself, was not the worse for my conversa-
" tion: but, to do justice to the whole parish, I
" must say that there was a something in the under-
" standing and manners of its inhabitants which,
" like the countenance of their country, and the
" neatness of their village, exalted them in my mind.
" It was a something that clearly evinced a pervading
" influence of soul: the very villagers had a sober
" self-respect, unmixed with arrogance, in their de-
" meanour, a justness of thinking on the subjects
" to which their thinking extended, and a kindness
" in their manners that more than supplied the place
" of urbanity. I thought so then, and I never af-
" terwards altered my opinon.

" Struck with this effect, when the abatement
" of more vivid contemplations permitted it to re-
" cur to my mind, I was led to inquire for a cause,
" and I found a very natural one: for three succes-
" sive generations, the parish of Melford had been
" blessed with vicars of a truly pastoral character;
" and the actual incumbent, whom the parishioners

" had in a body petitioned to yield to the advice of
" his physicians, and go abroad, to save his life and
" gain new health, was the successor of his father;
" for the presentation of the vicarage belonged to
" an elder branch of the family. The venerable
" vicar whom he succeeded had lived upwards of
" forty years among them: as he grew old, his son
" acted as his curate; and they had both, with
" apostolic sincerity and ardour, devoted themselves
" to the care of the souls entrusted to them. They
" did not confine their ministry to a cold reading
" of the Liturgy, and weekly common-place expo-
" sitions of obscure texts; they did not even deem
" preaching and praying their principal duty. The
" going to church they considered as periodical
" meetings for the purpose of general praise, thanks-
" giving, and supplication; and the sermon as a
" lecture read by the father of a family: but they
" were far from considering it as the best opportu-
" nity of rectifying the understanding, improving
" the hearts, and forming the souls of their parish-
" ioners for salvation. The chief service they ren-
" dered them was through the means of friendly
" condescension and familiar talk. The doctrines
" of their Bible were not neatly put by to be neatly
" produced on set occasions; but the precepts of
" their Master, his life, and death, the state of
" mankind, and the necessity of industry, were in-
" culcated in private, in an easy, cheerful manner;
" as a kind physician explains the nature of his
" friend's malady, and the qualities of the medicine
" which he prescribes for his restoration. They
" sowed the seeds of true religion and sound sense,
" without mixing the grains of enthusiasm. They
" evinced the interest of laying up a treasure in
" another life, from the certainty of leaving this;
" but, at the same time, inculcated honest employ-

" ment in this as one of the means of amassing " that treasure; and taught, that the excessive fer- " vour which was unfavourable to temporal duties, " was, in that very respect, unfavourable also to " eternal hopes. In short, the inhabitants of Mel- " ford, their fathers and their children, had been so " tutored by their amiable and estimable ministers, " that the natural glow of the human mind, neither " producing on the one hand an independent arro- " gance, nor, on the other, running into imaginary " fervours and superstition, had formed, if I may so " express myself, that humble dignity of soul which " marked the character of my fellow-parishioners, " and in which, I hope, they are not singular. But " I digress, Aubrey, and usurp your province."— " The observation," said Aubrey, " conveys a re- " proach which I deserve; but I mean to reform, " Cowper: Oh! that, instead of looking forward to " Aubrey-hall, I had early trod in the footsteps of " the vicars of Melford! but Mariton shall be an- " other Melford."—" Bless you!" said Mr. Cow- per, " Mariton is one of the most fashionable places " in the whole country."—" But pray, Mr. Cow- " per," said Arthur-William, " what became of Fan- " ny Ross all this time?" The whole group laughed at Arthur-William's question. " My dear fellow," said Mr. Cowper, delighted with his attention, " she " was making her wedding-clothes."—" Oh! then," cried Arthur-William, " you are going to be mar- " ried soon now!"—Mr. Cowper gazed at him fondly. Arthur-William's present tense had in view the action of the story; to Mr. Cowper it restored the actual prospect of unspent happiness. " Dear " boy!" said he, with an emotion which he sub- dued as it rose; " yes, our wedding-day approach- " ed; and Fanny was busy in preparing her dress " for the occasion.

"I had brought from London with me some laces
" and muslins, of different patterns, to make her
" gowns, and some drawings of fashions to guide
" her in making them; but,—oh! how justly had
" nature framed her mind!—though she admired
" them, she persuaded me to give up the idea of
" her becoming suddenly fine, and to allow her
" to choose herself what she should wear. It was
" the most modest, the most becoming dress I ever
" saw; it was plain, and not richer than that which
" her companion and bride-maid, Susan Cowsel,
" wore on the occasion: it is easily described, be-
" ing merely a white gown, differing from her old
" ones only in the make, which she consented, at my
" request, to copy from the Grecian mode of one
" of my drawings. She wore a straw-hat, which,
" as well as her gown, was decorated with white
" ribbons; and, on her neck, was a coral necklace.
" I have already painted Fanny to you, and I shall
" now leave you to dress her in her bridal-garments;
" I shall only say, that the emotion of gratitude in
" her countenance was now unmixed with pain;
" another still more powerful auxiliary of beauty
" had taken its place, and that was love attended
" with joy; it beamed from her lips, it glistened in
" her eyes, it animated every motion. Artless, de-
" void of vanity, glowing with benevolent affections,
" my Fanny was the most beautiful creature I ever
" saw. Our wedding-day was a festival to the whole
" parish. Young Cowsel and his sister were the
" bride-man and bride-maid; several handsome
" young women, clad in white, attended Fanny to
" church; old Cowsel gave her away; the curate
" blessed us, and the blessing was echoed from one
" end of the parish to the other. I was the happiest
" of human beings.

" Soon after my marriage, it was necessary for

" me to return to town, and proceed to enter my " name at Cambridge. I left Fanny under the care " of her mother and Cowsel, and set out to take " every precaution necessary for ensuring the con- " cealment of my marriage, and the success of my " plan. Instead of going directly to London, I went " to Marlborough, in order to consult my friend " Neville, who was also on the eve of going to the " same university, the head of his family possessing " the hereditary estate in an adjacent county. Hav- " ing fully unbosomed myself to Neville, he obtain- " ed his father's consent to proceed to town with " me, on my promise to accompany him to his un- " cle's, and thence to college.

" Old Mr. Neville having told his son that he " meant to allow him a sum of money to furnish a " library, I took advantage of this in London, to get " from my father a sum for the same purpose. His " disposition was very liberal, and he desired me " not to be niggardly in the purchase of books. He " was happy that I was to accompany Neville, and " recommended to me to make use of his connexions " in establishing myself in the university; for, though " he had purposed to accompany me, and introduce " me to some friends in the neighbourhood of Cam- " bridge, he preferred the opportunity which offer- " ed, both as it led to superior connexion, and " saved him a jaunt for which he had but little time. " When we took leave of him, he put a hundred " pound bank-note in my hand, for my quarter's " allowance, which he told me should be always " paid in advance. He then gave me a draft on " his banker for three hundred pounds, which he " said was for my books when I was fixed. I was " extremely grateful to my father for this liberality; " and my gratitude was on the point of betraying " my secret, when the effusion of it was checked by

" my recollection of the injunctions I had before re-
" ceived from him, which, you remember, were
" crowned with the hope of my finding a wife
" among the rich and the great. I contented my-
" self, therefore, with thanking him warmly, and
" set out with Neville for Biggleswade, where we
" spent two days; and, on the third, were accom-
" panied to Cambridge by his uncle, who recom-
" mended us to persons of influence.

" We were fortunately settled together at Trinity,
" in rooms sufficiently commodious for us both, and
" the more so, as it was my intention to be as little
" at college as possible. As soon as we were left
" to ourselves, I digested my plan with Neville,
" whose friendship, which had hitherto veiled my
" clandestine happiness, was now to guard me in
" my blest obscurity. I told him, that I did not
" mean to devote one farthing of my three hundred
" pound draft to books; and he agreed, if ever my
" father should come to Cambridge, to let his li-
" brary pass for mine: he was also to be the channel
" of my correspondence with my family: and, if
" any friend of my father's unexpectedly called, he
" was to give some consistent account of my absence,
" and forward immediate intelligence to me. You
" may be sure I staid no longer at Trinity than was
" necessary to settle my plan: as soon as I had kept
" my first term, I shook hands with Neville, gave up
" Granta to the assiduities of mathematical geniuses
" and poetical imaginations, and flew on the wings
" of love to Melford.

" What a dream of happiness! nor was it very
" transient; it lasted—but I will not anticipate—it
" *was* happiness;—it now appears but a dream. I
" will not dwell upon it; but when I look back,
" even at this day, I think it was rational happiness.
" My time was chiefly spent in improving Fanny,

" and increasing my own knowledge; nor do I " think I lost much by tutoring instead of being " tutored. On my return to Melford, my thoughts " were bent on securing some provision for Fanny, " that should defy all caprice of temper or fortune; " and, at the same time, I was determined that my " family should receive her as my wife: but these " were things that could not take place at once; " and Fanny was not only convinced that it was " better to delay making the confession, as I had " stated to Cowsel, but wished it for another reason, " which was, that it would render her fitter to con- " verse with her sister-in-law: and, as for the honour " of being noticed, it had never entered her head; " for her views strayed not beyond the bounds of " real happiness.

" Meanwhile, to their great joy, I imparted to " Fanny and her mother, and also to our friend " farmer Cowsel, my intention of securing a lasting " habitation at Melford, be my fortune in life what " it might. Mrs. Ross's cottage stood on a little " eminence, commanding such picturesque scenery, " that I had, from the first moment of my certainty " of Fanny's heart, cast my eyes upon it, as a spot " to be improved and dedicated to love and happi- " ness. With Cowsel's advice and assistance, I " purchased it and about six acres of land round it. " The purchase-money I paid after my next trip to " Cambridge, when I returned with my second " quarter's allowance and the cash for my father's " draft, two hundred pounds of which I put into " Cowsel's hands for my wife.

" As we lived well upon the half of my income, " for love can live well upon a little, I laid out " four hundred pounds in extending our cottage " and beautifying the ground about it. I did not " scruple to take my father at his word, in respect

" to the sum for books, and, in one of my trips to " Cambridge, I drew upon him for an additional " two hundred pounds. Building, gardening, and " mental cultivation, so occupied my Fanny and " me that the world was nothing to us, and we " conceived all bliss to concentrate in loving, rais- " ing shrubs and flowers, laying out walks, contriv- " ing vistas, and enlarging and diversifying our " ideas. In the first year our happiness was in- " creased by the birth of a daughter. Here was " a new sensation for us! To tell you what I felt " on finding myself a father is impossible; and to " you, Aubrey, would be needless. Fanny's feel- " ings on becoming a mother were perhaps still more " exquisite; and our little girl called forth in both " of us those sweet sensations which nature kindles " in the breasts of parents. We had her christened " Frances. From the rapid progress of her cooing, " smiling, and walking, in the first year of her life, " we thought her a wonder, and we called her little " Miracle.

" It was when my child was about fourteen " months old that my father informed me of his " being advised to go and reside for some time in a " more southern climate, and of his intention to " take my sister with him: however, my plan of " discovering my situation was not mature, and I " suffered them to take leave of me, without breath- " ing a word upon the subject. My father told me " that my income should continue to be regularly " paid; but at the same time hinted to me, that he " should not be sorry to hear that I was in the good " graces of one of the Miss Nevilles, who were both " girls of large fortune."

" I wonder," cried Arthur-William, " that he " did not find you out before he went."—" So do " I, Mr. Cowper," said Mrs. Aubrey; " for your

" old master at Thornbury must have known of your " marriage; and one would think that he would " have conceived it his duty to inform your father " of it."—" I did not think of mentioning the " lecture I received from him on the occasion," replied Mr. Cowper; " but he talked to me pretty " roundly, I assure you. He did not, however, " know of it till it was too late to interfere to any " good purpose; and he was too rational not to see " the propriety of my plan of temporary concealment: of course, he remained silent from a good " motive."—" I cannot help wishing," said Arthur, " that your father had known it before you parted." —" It is the wish of a pure heart," said Mr. Cowper, " and most devoutly do I now wish it too. " What misery would it not have saved me! You " will perhaps pity me, my dear young friend, when " you hear, as you will presently, how dearly I have " expiated this want of candour."

CHAPTER XIX.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's History.

" My father's absence from England," said Mr. Cowper, resuming his narrative, " increased the " security of my secret, and I completely resigned " myself to the full stream of happiness, so early my " lot in life. Fanny, by the progress of her mind, " daily improved her charms; and her delight in " the tender offices of a mother endeared her more " and more to my heart. Our little dominions " flourished, the grounds were already clothed by " the rising of the shrubs which we had planted, " and, while our fruit-trees, our firs, willows, syca-

" mores, and elms, were making their slower pro-
" gress, the protection of the walnut-trees and wild
" cherry furnished enough of the sublime of vege-
" table scenery to the cottage, which was now a
" commodious little habitation. To the original cot
" I had added a simple building of two stories, with
" a bow in front, slightly curved; and to this build-
" ing I had joined the counterpart of the original cot:
" the little wings were dedicated to bed-chambers
" and offices; and the middle was formed into a
" hall, parlour, and a room of considerable size up
" stairs. The architecture was rural, and our fur-
" niture useful, plain, and cheap. The outside of
" our habitation was picturesque: the curved centre
" appeared handsome, in white plaister between the
" two sides, which looked like bowers; jessamines,
" honey-suckles, and other luxuriant plants being
" trained every where about them; for Fanny had
" already learned to delight in the bower of Adam
" and Eve."—" What! that," said Arthur-William,
" where there was laurel and myrtle, roses and jas-
" mines? Emily knows it by heart."—" Then,"
said Mr. Cowper, " she will repeat the lines for me,
" I know, to give my tongue a little rest." Emily
smiled at Arthur-William, and, calling him little
rogue, repeated Milton's description:

" The roof
" Of thickest covert was inwoven shade
" Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
" Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
" Acanthus and each od'rous bushy shrub
" Fenc'd up the verdant walk; each beauteous flower,
" Iris all hues, roses and jessamine,
" Rear'd high their flourish'd heads between, and wrought
" Mosaic; under foot the violet,
" Crocus and hyacinth, with rich inlay,
" Broider'd the ground."

"I thank you, my dear Miss Aubrey," said Mr. Cowper, and then proceeded: "There was, in more "respects than one, similarity enough, at least in "our ideas, between the dwelling of our first parents "and that which we had made, to induce us to "think it a Paradise, and we were inclined to give "it the name, but that the heavenly title belonged "to the whole district around us. We thought, "however, that, allowing Melford to be Paradise, "we might call our cottage Eden-bower, a name "which it retains to this day."—"Who lives "there now?" said Arthur-William, who was the only one of the party that felt no reluctance in interrupting Mr. Cowper.—"Let me see, said Mr. "Cowper; who lives there now?—We will ask "Edmund to-morrow. In the mean time, suppose "I tell you who was one of the most agreeable of "its visitors at the time I was talking of. Soon "after our little Fanny was born, Mr. Grey, the "worthy vicar of Melford, returned with new health "and vigour, and he and Mrs. Grey, for they had "no family, resumed their residence at the vicarage. "He had been punctually informed of all that "passed in his parish. At first he thought pro-"per to assume a reserve, indicative of displea-"sure, not only to us, but to Mr. Cowsel: but, "after investigating the whole business, and in-"forming himself of the life we led, he relaxed; "and, having solemnly expressed his disapproba-"tion of our clandestine proceeding, not only for-"gave us, but soon became attached to us.

"Mrs. Grey, pleased with the improvement of "my Fanny, and equally with her unaltered modesty "and diffidence, called her her daughter, received "her with affection, and presented her to her "friends as her equal; while, in private, she lavish-"ed the highest encomiums on her, which, sup-

" ported by a judicious account of the pretensions " of her family, soon obtained her the notice of the " vicar's friends. She mingled with genteel com- " pany as if she had been bred in it from her in- " fancy; and, before I left her to go abroad, the " first Duchess in the country would not have " blushed to introduce her at court. But parade, " and pomp, and fashion, were the last things that " would ever have swayed her heart: her heart " was at home; it had taken root at Eden-bower, " and there it delighted to expand. I was but too " happy.

" At length I received the fatal letter that called " me from my paradise; that was to awake me from " my celestial trance. My father, in the most " urgent terms, desired to see me without delay. " I communicated the sad summons to Fanny, to " Cowsel, and to the vicar. The last advised me " to obey it, and to find an opportunity of reconcil- " ing my father to my conduct; and he requested, " at the same time, that I would carry from him a " letter on the subject, which he hoped would have " a good effect. Fanny wept, but assented to the " necessity of my obedience. Cowsel begged, be- " fore I went, as I was now of full age,—I was " three-and-twenty,—that I would have a regular " settlement made of the property in his hands. As " for me, grieved as I was to the heart, I was con- " vinced that a short separation from Fanny was " not to be avoided; and I soothed my misery with " the thoughts of returning soon to her, either with " my father and sister, or charged to carry her to " them. I therefore resolved to do as Cowsel de- " sired, and then to set off. The good vicar con- " sented to be one of the trustees of the settlement; " and, when I came to collect the whole of my " Fanny's fortune, I found it amount to an income

" which we could have been content upon all our " lives, without any farther assistance from my " father. Our expenditure, together with the im- " provement of Eden-bower, had never exceeded " two hundred a-year; and, three years having " elapsed, we had, from the annual accumulation " and my advance for books, a fund of eleven hun- " dred pounds, besides our cottage and Fanny's " tontine, which was fifteen pounds a-year; so that " the whole of the income was seventy pounds, " without rent to pay, and without reckoning the " good Mrs. Ross's tontine, which was also fifteen " pounds a-year, and which, since my marriage, had " accumulated in her own hands. This view of a " provision for my wife was a very pleasing reflection " and helped to console me in the affliction I suf- " fered from the thoughts of leaving her. The deed " was soon prepared, and with inexpressible delight " did I execute it. The trust was declared to pur- " chase land, to be settled, first, on Fanny for her " life, then on myself for my life, then to go to " my children, share and share alike, with the ex- " ception of the cottage, which the smiles of my " little Fanny won entirely for herself.

" When I executed the deed, I took leave of the " vicar and Cowsel, and determined to spend the " next day alone with my family, as I had fixed to " begin my journey the day after. What mingled " sensations of pleasure and pain filled the remain- " ing hours! The crisis was doubly anxious, as I " knew that Fanny expected soon to be mother of " another darling. Solicitous to relieve the oppres- " sion she saw me suffering, she made every effort " to remove it. She observed, that I had it in my " power to make the separation a short one; that " an explanation with my father was now desirable; " that I should return and find little Fanny grown,

" playing with a brother or sister; and that my " absence would open a new source of delight in " the exertions of the imagination. In spite of these " encouragements, I was heavy at heart: I was go- " ing to cross the sea; my father, though liberal, " had never been open to me; and I recollected the " matrimonial views he had several times suggested, " not only in his conversation, but in his letters. It " was in vain, however, to think thus: my trunks " were prepared, the post-chaise came to the door, " as it was ordered, early in the morning; but it " was noon before I could be forced from the ob- " jects of my heart, and not till the vicar, calling at " Eden-bower to cheer the family, shamed me " away. ' Well, then, adieu!' cried I, ' adieu! To " your care, Grey, I leave her. Fanny, adieu!'

" Never shall I forget the figure and countenance " of my Fanny; the tears streaming from her blue " eyes, while, unable to command the word, she " waved her adieu with her handkerchief. Think " —" Here Mr. Cowper paused.—" No; it is for " me to think," continued he, " for me to writhe, " for me to weep!" He rose, and, breaking from the party, ran out of the room, followed by Aubrey.

CHAPTER XX.

The danger of unguided benevolence—An effort of cautious generosity.

When Mr. Cowper, overcome by the vivid images of his memory, flew from the Aubreys, the evening was considerably advanced. He had dwelt with more detail on the incidents of his story than he at first intended, by which he had increased the interest of it in the minds of the party: he had inter-

spersed it with his observations; and had occasionally intermitted his narrative to hear the opinions of his friends, and to give his own; and the wing of Time had borne them so smoothly onward that his progress was forgotten, and Arthur-William had unconsciously robbed Sleep a full hour of his usual tribute. He, as well as his brother and sisters, could have sat up all night to listen to the account of charming Fanny Ross; and they were not a little disappointed when Aubrey returned to the room, and informed them that Mr. Cowper was gone home. "O—h!" a lengthened oh! proclaimed their regret; but, on their mother's observing the hour, and Aubrey's telling them that Mr. Cowper was to be with them the next evening, they were satisfied. "Well!" cried Arthur-William, yawning, "I'll go up to "'Sbidlikins: I dare say I shall dream of Fanny "Ross; shan't you, Arthur? If I do, I wish it may be "kissing little Fanny on the sopha."—"How do you "know she had a sopha, my love?" said Arthurina. —"I don't know," replied he.—"But I do," said Emily: "you remember mamma's playing with you "and kissing you on the sopha."—"So I do. But, "mamma, what was the matter with Mr. Cowper? "What made him cry so, and run away? Do you "think we shall hear that Fanny Ross is dead?" —"I am afraid so," replied Mrs. Aubrey, "though "Mr. Cowper has said nothing that makes it cer- "tain."—"I think, from his observations," said Arthur, "that his grief rather arises from his reflec- "tion on some part of his own conduct."—"It may "be so," said Aubrey; "and, from hints that have "fallen from him, I am inclined to think that her "fate has been worse than death."—"How do you "mean, papa?" cried Arthurina.—"I mean, my "love," replied Aubrey, "that her afflictions may "have produced a derangement of mind."—"Poor

" Mr. Cowper!' exclaimed Emily. The whole family joined in pitying him; and, after Arthur-William went to Mrs. Miller, another hour was spent in talking of Fanny Ross and Melford, and of the arrangement of the parsonage of Mariton, where rooms were appropriated for the visits of Mr. Cowper and the Smyths.

The next morning, just as the family had done breakfast, and were prolonging their chat, Cæsar delivered a letter to Aubrey, saying, the person who brought it was waiting below. Breaking the seal of the letter, Aubrey found its contents to be a few lines from Mr. Elton, which he read aloud:

" My dear friend,

" The bearer of this, Mr. M'Knuckle, will ex-
" plain to you the reason of my not breakfasting
" with you this morning, according to my en-
" gagement; and will deliver a message, the sub-
" ject of which, circumstances and want of time pre-
" vent my writing. I am, with the greatest esteem,

" Yours sincerely,

" JOHN ELTON."

" Thursday evening."

Mrs. Aubrey and the young people went up to Mrs. Miller, and Aubrey to Elton's messenger. He was a short, thick-set, red-faced man, in a shabby blue coat, red waistcoat, and fustian breeches; his stockings were grey worsted, ribbed, and in his shoes were large pewter buckles. " You come from Mr.
" Elton," said Aubrey.—" Indaid I do," replied M'Knuckle, " and I was to have been here in time
" last night by dark, to have prevented him the
" disgrace of slaiping at my cousin Mr. James
" M'Knuckle's; but I knew he gave it me in time
" to be too late; so I promised him to come with

" all spaid, on condition he would make up his mind " to my not coming back last night before this " morning; so I went to bed, and the first thing I " did as soon as I got up out of my warm bed was " to come straight from my lodging in Russel-court, " through Covent-Garden, to carry your honour to " your friend."—" I really do not understand you," said Aubrey.—" And that's surprising now," said M'Knuckle, " for I never spoke plainer in all my " life, in a genteel way; for I would not go to tell " you plump-dash, in an open manner, that my " uncle and me arrested your friend yesterday " morning in his bed."—" Oh! I understand you " now," said Aubrey; " Mr. Elton is in jail then." —" And indaid he is not," replied M'Knuckle; " so " that whether I spake jonteelly, or candidly, it's " all one with your understanding. I tell you once " more that Mr. Eelton, your friend, is in Carey- " street, at my uncle's: every body knows Mr. James " M'Knuckle's."—" A spunging-house, perhaps?" said Aubrey.—" Fait!" said M'Knuckle, grinning, " and that sure enough is the name given to my " uncle's castle by some people: but that's an En- " glish-Irish bull; for, don't spungers go to an open " house? When did you ever hear of spunging at " a lock-up house?"—" Now then," said Aubrey, " that I do understand Mr. Elton is in your uncle's " custody, pray what is his message to me?"— " Message!" cried the bailiff's follower with sur- prise; " why that; and I was to show you the way." —" The way is easily found," said Aubrey, " and I " will not rob you of your time."—" As for the " way," replied M'Knuckle, that's aisily found sure " enough, every body knows Mr. James M'Knuckle's; " but, as to robbing me of my time, I beg your ho- " nour's pardon there; you can't do that, for I have " sold it to your friend, fait, and for a very good

"price, and so it is at your service, without any "robbery at all."—"Very well," said Aubrey, "but "I will not detain you."—"Very well, your ho- "nour!" returned the catch-pole; "and I'll tell "your friend that you'll be with him in a jiffy; and "so Paddy M'Knuckle wishes your honour a good- "night." Saying which he nodded his head, and made his exit.

Aubrey was the less surprised at the scene between the bailiff and himself, as Mr. Cowper's account of Elton had in some measure prepared him for it: he had considered the check given to him as thrown into the fire, and he did not expect ever to see or hear of him more. But now his errors, by degrees, were lost in the magnitude of his misfortune: the horror of a prison was a punishment that exceeded the desert of negligent dissipation; and Aubrey, in whose bosom resentment has been observed to possess less force than perhaps is both necessary and laudable, thought no more of the deceit he had practised on himself, or, rather, endeavoured to palliate it. Clear it was, that the breaking of his appointment was the effect of necessity; he had been arrested, and therefore could not come: he might not have thought it prudent to send the balance of the check; and, if Elton should even desire to see him to request to use the whole for his liberation, it would be but natural. At first, while talking with M'Knuckle, he had intended not to go to him; but, on reflection, he deemed it right to inquire about the check; and felt, besides, that he was now morally bound to go, as he had suffered his messenger to return without putting a negative to the unauthorised answer he had framed, and from which Elton would undoubtedly expect to see him. He therefore resolved to consider it as an engagement, and to keep it; and, staying only to relate the

affair to Mrs. Aubrey, he went after Paddy M'Knuckle in about half an hour.

In his way to Carey-street, he meditated on the situation and character of Elton; and laid a plan for his reformation. He persuaded himself that it was an opportunity thrown in his way by Providence, to begin a reform of his own neglect of his professional duties: he resolved to proceed by testifying a disposition to serve him; by gently reproving the fabrication of Winfield and his family; by devoting the amount of Sensitive's check to his liberation; and by endeavouring, in a friendly, warm manner, to impress upon his mind a sense of the folly and sinfulness of artifice, and the consequence of it both here and hereafter. Glowing with the virtue of his intention—for virtue in design being virtue in fact, the conscious mind receives its reward, even though the malign influence of the evil spirit should interrupt its execution—Aubrey, glowing with the noble design of saving a soul, and revolving the arguments dictated by Reason and Piety, knocked at the door of the spunging-house.

It was opened to him by his new acquaintance, Paddy M'Knuckle. "Well, friend," said Aubrey, "you see I have not been long after you."—"And, "upon my soul," replied M'Knuckle, "that's no "fault of mine; and I wish from the bottom of my "body you had staid at home." Aubrey, to avoid the troublesome loquacity of the bailiff, made an effort to go in, saying, "I want Mr. Elton."—"And "indaid!" said the man, without moving from the door; "you must seek him elsewhere then."—"What do you mean?" cried Aubrey, surprised.—"Why I main," replied M'Knuckle, "that he is "not here."—"Not here! then pray why did you "give me the trouble of coming?"—"I'll tell your "honour," answered he; "for I see you are a jon-

" tleman, and will be above casting blame on Paddy " M'Knuckle, who is as innocent of the trouble he " has given you as your honour's own soul. But, " before I up and tell you, you must come in and " sit down a bit, for it will take a while to talk."

Aubrey was now too curious to learn the particulars of Elton's sudden release, not to sacrifice some time and some feeling to obtain the account; and he went into the passage: the door was immediately double-locked by M'Knuckle, who then conducted him to a back-room, desiring him, at the same time, not to be uneasy at being locked in, for that there was some good company in the parlours, who would give their ears to get out as easily as he should. " And now that I have got your honour's private " ear," said he, " I could tell you a few names, and " let you a little into some histories that surprised " Paddy M'Knuckle himself, till he got used to " 'em."—" Now, my good fellow," said Aubrey, " consider that I am in a hurry."—" And fait! so I " will," replied M'Knuckle: " then you must know, " it's all a bull of Mr. Eelton's own; for, if he had " a told me that the other jontleman would have " been here last night, I should never have thought " of coming to you this morning. Now I'll tell you " the whole matter, just as it happened. My uncle " Jimmy no sooner got the writ, which gave him a " power over the body of your worthy friend, than " he set me about tracing and watching him with " all my might; and fait! wid all the jontleman's " cunning, for he is no young fox, I soon found out " his cover; and, when I had safely lodged him, I " takes my uncle to the spot, and so we nabbed " him. When he looked at the writ, ' Oh! jontle- " men,' said he, addressing his spaich to me and my " uncle, " this is a paice of malice: the money shall " be paid: I have only to write to a friend; will one

" of you carry the letter? I'll reward you like a " gentleman.' With that my uncle consented to " stay with your friend till I brought back an an- " swer: so he writes a long epistle, and sends me " away to the top of Piccadilly wid it: and there I " left the letter sure enough, and came back with " this answer, that the jontleman was gone out till he " came back to dinner, when he would send an an- " swer for himself. So there was no help for it; " and here he came, and here he dined, like a jewel " of a prince. ' But, ho!' says he, ' I must not have " the disgrace to slaip in confinement.' So, after " dinner, he says to me, ' M'Knuckle,' says he, ' I " have another friend that would come and do the " business, though I would radher have the todder; " but it grows late, and I am resolved not to slaip " here to-night.'—Says I, ' You must make haste " then; for, mind you, our doors and your suppers " don't kaip the same hours.' With that he writes " a short letter; that little bit of a thing I brought " to you, you know, and gives it me, and says, " ' M'Knuckle! here's a guinea for you, and a let- " ter; the guinea you may give to Lucy M'Gra, if " you like;'—for he had made me drink sweet " Lucy's health in a bumper, so he came to know " she was christened Lucy M'Gra:—' and as for the " letter,' says he, ' you must manage cleverly for " me—you must first go again to Piccadilly; if Mr. " ——' oh, devil burn the pretty name if I can re- " member it, but it's all one:—' if that there jontle- " man is coming, then bring this little letter back; " if he is not come home, then mind and carry this " to Albemarle-street, number —'—hut, I forget " your number—' there tell my friend Daubry where " I am, and bring him to me.'—' Oh! devil burn " me,' says I, ' but I'll do this affair to a *t;* but, by " my soul! Mr. Eelton, it is too late for the excur-

" sion; but, howsomdever, set your heart at rest;
" Paddy M'Knuckle will manage it some way or
" other to your heart's content.' So I left him, and
" went straight to my lodgings, after I had taken a
" sup at the little Bacchus riding upon the big bar-
" rel; for, says I to myself, what signifies your going
" all the way to Piccadilly to-night, becaze, if Mr.
" Eelton's friend comes in time, he is off already;
" and, if he does not come in time, why it's too late
" for me to fetch eidher of 'em in time before to-
" morrow morning. And wasn't this fair raisoning
" now? I'll be judgt by yourself. And was I a magi-
" cian, or a witch of Endor, to detect that Mr. ——,
" the Piccadilly jontleman, was, true enough, on his
" way to Mr. James M'Knuckle's; and that, before
" I turned in, or began to amuse my imagination
" with the thought of draiming of my sweet Lucy
" M'Gra, Mr. Eelton was capering about London
" town wherever he pleased? Was I, laying sound
" aslaip in Russel-court, to draim of Mr. Eelton's
" good luck, and not of my own sweet Lucy
" M'Gra?"—" I thank you, Mr. M'Knuckle," said Aubrey, who, though entertained with this new rhapsody, had no inclination to prolong his pleasure: " I find that Mr. Elton was released last night
" by the interference of another gentleman, and I
" only wish now to know the name of his friend:
" can you recollect it?"—" Burn me! my dear," replied he, " but I have a very good memory for
" faces, though not for names; for my business, do
" you see, lies more in descriptions and kays than
" names of strangers." Here he was called by a loud voice. " Oh! how you are lucky!" continued he to Aubrey; " that's Mr. James M'Knuckle him-
" self; and to be sure he can't tell you the name
" without mentioning it, when he has got it down
" written on a paper." Saying which he opened

the door, and no sooner put his head out than he popped it back again, and, with a wink and a nod, whispered Aubrey that he "might now ax the jon-"tleman himself; for, fait! here he was with his "uncle."

They advanced; and Aubrey with pain, but not surprise, saw Sensitive. "Ha!" cried the latter, "who should have thought of seeing you here?"—"I am returning westward," said Aubrey; "shall I "wait for you?"—"If you will walk slowly to the "end of the street," replied Sensitive, "I will over-"take you; my business is very short, but requires "privacy."—"Certainly," returned Aubrey; "but "perhaps you will not think it necessary to be very "delicate on this occasion, when I tell you that I "came myself to see Elton." On this Sensitive made no scruple to transact the business in his presence; and Aubrey, recollecting Mr. Cowper's conversation respecting him, saw with mingled sorrow, affection, and pity, Sensitive redeem the obligation which he had entered into the evening before, to procure Elton's release, by paying down cash to the amount of two hundred pounds.

Aubrey's emotion was not unattended with admiration; for he was not one of those who thought that imprudence totally changed the nature of generosity; or that the weakness of heart which induces a man to forget his own interest for the pleasure of relieving others was contemptible. It originated at least in the source of virtue; and, though the stream spent itself by taking a course over quicksands, the clearness, the purity of it was never lost while a drop remained in its channel. His affection for Sensitive was increased by what he saw, and his anxiety to save him augmented in proportion; he therefore resolved to take the freedom of a friend, and the privilege of an older man, in using this occurrence as

the foundation of a mild warning. As they walked homewards he divulged Elton's situation and loss of virtue, and made him acquainted with the fabrication of the distresses of Winfield's family, and the fate of his own check; and, with the warmth of a father, entreated him to be more careful in the disposal of his means of doing good. Sensitive, impressed by his affectionate manner, far from being hurt at the liberty he had taken, thanked him cordially, and assured him that he would be more upon his guard.

They spent the rest of the morning together; in the course of which they strolled into the auction-room, and were gratified to find the exhibition of Aubrey's pictures still crowded with company. In his way home, after parting with Sensitive, Aubrey met Mr. Goodground, for the first time since he had received his admonitory epistle, which was delivered with Sensitive's generous one. "I thought, Sir," said Goodground, "that I should have seen you, or "heard from you, on my letter."—"It was not "much calculated, Mr. Goodground," replied Aubrey, "to encourage a hope of deriving the assist-"ance I wanted, from any further discussion of my "situation."—"Oh! pardon me, Sir," said Goodground, "there is no man alive more ready to as-"sist his friends, when assistance can be of real ser-"vice. I am glad, Sir, to see so valuable a collec-"tion of pictures in Mr. Flourish's rooms: I have "not a doubt they will produce a considerable sum; "and, if you assure me that it will more than cover "all your debts, come and take a beef-steak with "me to-day, and you shall have the two hundred "pounds on your note of hand. I love generosity, "Mr. Aubrey; but you will allow that it should go "hand in hand with prudence."—"Certainly," replied Aubrey; "and, as I am engaged to-day, you

" will save your beef-steak; nor am I any longer in " want of the two hundred pounds."—" I am glad " to hear it, my dear Mr. Aubrey, heartily glad to " hear it. Good day—no man alive more anxious " to serve his friends."—" *Prudently*," added Aubrey.

After dinner, Aubrey related the occurrences of the morning to his family; and they were still commenting upon them when they heard a rap at the door; which Arthur-William guessed to be Mr. Cowper's.

CHAPTER XXI.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's history.

The guess was a good one; it was Mr. Cowper's knock, and he was presently announced. He was cordially welcomed by the family-party; and Arthur-William ran up and shook hands with him. He apologized for his precipitate retreat the preceding night, and promised to behave better as he proceeded in his narrative. After a little general chat, finding, from the countenances of the party, that they were anxious for the continuation of his history, he did not keep them long in suspense.

" I hope," said he, " that my reflections since I " ran from you will enable me to keep my promise " of behaving better to-night: yet, alas! I have " hitherto related to you nothing but venial errors " and a flow of happiness; whereas, the sequel of " my story is made up of damning crimes, punish- " ments condign, and misery extreme: but hear me " out. After a fatiguing journey of three days, I " arrived at Falmouth, where I found the Lisbon

" packet heaving anchor. I hastened on board,
" and in an hour's time she was under weigh. By
" the pilot I sent a few lines a-shore, to be put into
" the post for my Fanny, informing her of the haste
" with which I embarked, and promising to write by
" the first opportunity after I landed in Portugal.
" The wind blowing from the north, soon wafted us
" across the bay of Biscay. Sailing down the coast
" of Portugal, we hailed a coasting pilot off the
" Douro, a considerable distance at sea; and another
" gentleman and myself engaged her to carry us
" and our luggage to Oporto, where, after beating
" off and on some hours at the mouth of the river,
" waiting the tide, we were safely landed.

" I need hardly describe the town to you; you
" know that it gave name to the whole kingdom,
" that it is a bishop's see, and next to Lisbon, the
" richest and most populous town in Portugal. It
" is built on the declivity of a steep mountain, and
" the streets are of course very uneven; but it is in
" general handsome; well paved, and by far the
" cleanest city in the kingdom: the fine quay ex-
" tends along the river from one end of the town to
" the other. The interspersion of trees and vines
" gives it a very agreeable appearance; and the
" grand inequality of the face of the country add-
" ing the sublime to the beautiful, I was struck with
" rapture when I first beheld the scene. On land-
" ing I hastened to my father's house, where I was
" received by him and my sister with the warmest
" affection. The latter, lively and handsome, was
" little altered from what she was when we parted:
" she was rather taller, had something of a foreign
" air, and spoke Portuguese and French fluently.
" But, in my father, there was a visible change: it
" was not, however, a decline of health; his person
" retained its strength, but the lines of his face were

" grown deep, his brow lowered, and his spirits, as " I learned from my sister, had entirely failed him " for some time past.

" The very day I arrived he took me apart to " speak to me on the subject which had made him " so urgent with me to come to Oporto; but, before " he entered upon it, he inquired what connexions " I had formed, and whether I had yet engaged the " affections of any woman of fortune. Had he not " looked so sadly, and had I not been afraid of add- " ing to the oppression I saw him suffering, I would " have taken this opportunity of divulging the se- " cret of my marriage; but, when I looked in my " father's face, I found my resolution give way, and " I determined to postpone my confession till I con- " sulted with my sister; I therefore evaded his ques- " tions as well as I could, and yielded to the guilt " of equivocation in telling him that I had never yet " met with a woman of fortune who had power to " engage my affections. He said he was sorry for " it; for that he had set his heart upon my connect- " ing myself in a way to provide greatly for a family, " which was not to be done with a middling fortune " without connexions. 'However, my dear Charles,' " said he, 'you are young, and may succeed yet, " only let me say the sooner the better: but, for the " present, we must turn our thoughts to your sister. " Harriet has her share of beauty; I have for a good " while past had in my eye several wealthy men for " her, and two have even offered themselves; one a " native and the other an Englishman, in the high- " est commercial line: but she is nice—I am afraid " too nice: it is, however, absolutely necessary that " she should marry; for I do not feel as I did, " Charles; and Heaven knows my life may last very " little longer. Now, she says she will never marry " a foreigner, and the merchant is not to her taste.

" But I am the less afflicted on this account, as it " appears to be in her power to make a good match, " and she does not seem averse to it: no doubt, " those marriages are the most fortunate where in- " terest and inclination concur. About three months " ago, a young man, named Smyth, arrived here, " attended by French servants. He came from " France, through Spain, to Lisbon, thence to this " place; and it seems to have been his intention " merely to look at Oporto, and continue his tra- " vels; but, accidentally meeting Harriet at the con- " sul's, he changed his plan, and has remained here " ever since. When he came he brought only a " letter from Lisbon, for the consul; but, since his " stay, he has received many of introduction, from " various quarters, to the principal people here, and " one of credit to a great extent from London to a " principal merchant. In short, I have no doubt of " his being a man of fortune; but I have a doubt " of another kind, which it behoves us to solve with- " out delay: I suspect his views to be dishonour- " able. His habit is sanguine, his expression ar- " dent, and his knowledge of the world consider- " able; yet, while he attends to Harriet with the " assiduity of a lover, not a word have I heard on " the subject of wedlock. The continuation of his " attentions will be an injury to your sister, if the " object of them be not ascertained; and, if marriage " be his view, it cannot, in my opinion, take place " too soon. I have therefore sent for you to assist " me in managing this affair; for I confess to you I " do not wish it broke off.'

" On hearing my father's reasons for calling me " to Oporto, I could not blame him; and, to be the " guardian of my sister's honour and happiness, was " a thought so pleasing to me, that it made some " amends for the painful one of the distance I was

" from the darlings of my heart. I told my father
" that I was sure my sister would open her mind to
" me, and that I had little doubt of soon discover-
" ing Smyth's. Harriet was as candid as I expect-
" ed. In the first conversation I had with her alone,
" which was in about an hour after that I had had
" with my father, she frankly told me all that had
" passed between her and her admirer. Smyth had
" professed the most ardent passion for her, and had
" used every means in his power to excite a return:
" he had even talked of marriage to her, but in a
" way that did not warrant her mentioning it to my
" father. He had wild notions respecting it, and
" had told her that she was the only woman he had
" ever seen who could make him think of it for a
" moment; but he had never directly made the of-
" fer. ' And how, Harriet,' said I, ' did you an-
" swer him when he talked in this way?'—' By care-
" lessly thanking him for his compliment,' said she,
" ' and professing a preference for a single life.'—
" ' But pray, Harriet,' said I, ' how does your heart
" stand affected?'—' Pleased with his passion,' re-
" plied she; ' and would not break at his desertion.'
" —' And have you given him any ground to believe
" that he is agreeable to you?'—' Is not permitting
" his admiration,' replied she, ' giving some
" ground?'—' But did he ever take any liberty with
" you?'—' At the house of Donna Seraphina de
" Monocella, a beautiful Portuguese, to whom you
" will be introduced, he has more than once com-
" pelled me to check him with a violence which I
" meant at the time should produce a lasting breach;
" but his intreaties, and Donna Seraphina's persua-
" sions, have prevented it.' I told Harriet that
" she had been imprudent in giving him a second
" opportunity; but that, as I found he was agreeable
" to her, I would at a proper time speak to Smyth;

" and that I did not doubt, if she would be con-
" ducted by me, to see them soon married; to which
" she answered with proper pride that she was in no
" hurry to be married, and that she should never
" break her heart for any man.

" Smyth, having been made to expect me, thought
" it proper to pay me a visit as soon as he heard of
" my arrival. I found him a handsome fellow, six
" feet high, well proportioned, and of a graceful
" mien. His eye was vivacious, quickly changing
" its object, except when fixed by the magic of
" beauty; but I could not help thinking, from the
" first moment I saw him, that his countenance be-
" spoke a designing heart. We entered into fami-
" liar chat, and he undertook to be my *cicerone*
" through Oporto. As we walked, he leaned on my
" arm with a friendly ease; and I soon found, from
" his conversation, that he was a libertine, and that
" he expected to find me one. He spoke slightingly
" of the Portuguese women in general, but dwelt
" with rapture on the charms of Donna Seraphina
" de Monocella, whom he described as possessing
" the elegant mould of the English, together with
" the *piquante tournure* of the Portuguese. ' In
" short,' said he, ' she is the most bewitching beauty
" I know, one excepted. She speaks English and
" French as well as she does Portuguese: but then
" she is such a prude. That's her house—shall I
" present you to her now?'

" Before I had time to utter a negative, he rang
" the door-bell, saying; ' if Seraphina receives us
" in her dishabille, you are a lost man; for it is in
" her undress she is most irresistible.' The door
" was opened by an English footman, whom he ask-
" ed if Don Alvarez de Monocella was at home;
" and being informed that he was not, desired to
" know if Donna Seraphina was visible: on which

" we were shown into an elegant saloon till he could " let us know.

" We were soon summoned to Donna Seraphina's " boudoir, where almost every thing that could give " the least assistance in seducing the senses seemed " to be collected. The room, which was lofty and " well-proportioned, though not large, was hung " with rose-coloured silk, divided into feigned pan- " nels by broad fine lace, reaching to about three " feet from the floor. The lower compartments of " the walls were filled with beautiful mythological " figures; Cupids, Venus and the Graces, groups of " nymphs, and various others. Curtains of a pale " straw-coloured persian, fringed with silver, hung " in rich festoons round the windows. The furni- " ture of the chairs and sophas was of the same " colour, but made of damask. The tables were of " beautiful satin-wood, that reflected the objects " over them. The middle divisions of two of the " pannels on each side of the room, conveniently si- " tuated at the elbows of the sophas, were filled with " books, elegantly bound: between these were broad " mirrors, in superb frames, fixed over the sophas. " The ceiling of the room was a clear azure, that " rivalled the sky; and on the floor was stretched a " fine green cloth, to emulate the verdure of spring. " On the magnificent marble chimney-piece, sup- " ported by Caryatides, stood an elegant clock, and " flower-vases, containing roses and myrtles in bloom, " which cast an agreeable odour through the air. " A piano-forte, a fine harp, and stands for music " and for drawings, completed the furniture of this " elegant boudoir. On one of the sophas lay a " Spanish guitar, with some songs and coloured " drawings, carelessly intermixed. On entering, I " was struck with the beauty of this finished piece " of artificial taste: but, though I was delighted, I

" could not help comparing with it the simplicity " and nature of Eden-bower; and I preferred—yes, " my mind was still pure enough to prefer the latter.

" Donna Seraphina allowed me some minutes to " contemplate her beautiful apartment before she " made her appearance; and I had just taken up a " Portuguese song from the sopha, when my atten- " tion was called to the other side of the room by " the opening of a door in the corner-pannel, which " I had not perceived. Donna Seraphina advanced, " and the simplicity of her dress formed a contrast " to the artful combination of her apartment. She " had on a simple, white linen garment, which was " gathered about her waist by a rosary; and her " head was bound with a light blue muslin hand- " kerchief, tied behind. Simple as was her dress, " however, it was a result of the nicest art; and the " mode of it, which was in the Grecian style, was " perfectly adapted to display her shape and the " symmetry of her limbs. Her face was exquisitely " handsome: her eyes were either vivacious or ten- " der, at her command; her smile graceful beyond " expression. But I will not be more particular in " my description; suffice it to say, she was a most " beautiful woman, about five-and-twenty years old. " She came forward with a smile; and, on Smyth's " presenting me, welcomed me to Oporto in a most " flattering manner, and altogether gave me a re- " ception that made a deep impression on me. She " spoke to me in English; and the slight deviation " of accent, by which I could just distinguish the " foreigner, rendered the language but the more " agreeable to my ear. She had a gaiety and ease " in her manners, at that time of day not much " known in our country, and which to an English- " man, so little acquainted as I was with foreign so- " ciety, were fascinating in such a woman as Donna

" Seraphina de Monocella. She started subjects, " talked fluently on them, took up her guitar with- " out being asked, and gave me a specimen of " the Portuguese song, with one of the most melo- " dious voices I ever heard. But what flattered me " most, and most captivated me, was the riveting of " her eyes upon me, insinuating into my unpractised " heart that she was more than commonly prepos- " sessed in my favour. Dare I own it to you? Such " an attack on one ignorant of the arts of coquetry " was irresistible: I had not been a week at Oporto " —I blush even at this distance of time for my de- " pravity—I had not been three days at Oporto, " before my magnet of Eden-bower lost its power " of attraction: Fanny—how shall I speak it!—sel- " dom engaged my thoughts; and, in the course of " a fortnight, I was so completely fascinated that, " without a single struggle, I devoted myself to the " passion inspired by Donna Seraphina."

" Oh, Mr. Cowper, Mr. Cowper!" cried Arthur, shuddering.—" My dear young friend," said Mr. Cowper, " I am more pleased than mortified at " your emotion. I have that to relate which will " ensure me your forgiveness; but your shuddering " at a crime is a pledge to your parents, to your " friends, to yourself, of the rectitude of your own " mind, and of the stability of your virtues: yet my " example is not a useless lesson; there are Sera- " phinas in England; you will now easily detect " them, and not only be upon your guard yourself, " but may serve a friend by describing the Seraphina " of Cowper." While Mr. Cowper was speaking to Arthur, Arthur-William went round to his mother, and, keeping his eyes fixed on him, said, in a whisper, loud enough to be heard by all the party: " Mamma, " I hate Mr. Cowper!"—" You are right, my little " fellow," said Cowper; " I should be sorry if you

" did not hate me at this moment; but you too shall " forgive me by and by."

" Donna Seraphina," continued he, resuming his narrative, " introduced me to her husband, " Don Alvarez, who was considerably older than " herself, and who, with all the politeness of a " fashionable husband, was as devoid of jealousy. He " had gradually become insensible to Seraphina's " charms; and was at this time under the in- " fluence of another attachment, that disposed him " to pay less attention to her conduct. Being on " the most intimate terms with my father and sister, " as well as with Smyth, they both requested me to " consider myself always at home in their house; " and I promised to make frequent use of the *entrée* " bestowed upon me; a promise I but too faithfully " kept; for, after the first fortnight, I was more " there than at my father's. Smyth, villain that he " was, had not only foreseen, but planned my infa- " tuation, and he was instigated by the most abo- " minable motives. By plunging me into a vicious " amour with a married woman, he flattered himself " so to corrupt my soul that I should set female vir- " tue at nought, and even be brought to conduce to " his dishonourable designs upon my sister. I soon, " however, convinced him of his mistake. Donna " Seraphina did not appear in my eyes the charac- " ter he intended I should see. So pure was my " heart, that had I supposed her devoid of virtue, I " should have been in no danger: I was the more " alive to her charms, and to the enjoyment of the " interest I had excited in her heart, by connecting " with them the superiority of her mental faculties " and the delicacy of her sensibility. My crime at " first consisted in forgetting, or rather not thinking " of the sacred situation in which Donna Seraphina " stood, and in overlooking my own. When Smyth,

" therefore, displayed his libertine notions, he but " the sooner roused me to the care of Harriet's in- " nocence and peace of mind, and I resolved to bring " his courtship to an immediate conclusion one way " or the other.

" I frankly told my sister that I thought Smyth " would not make a good husband, and I advised " her to overcome the preference she seemed to " have for him; but, at all events, to put an end to " the uncertainty of his views. In a consultation with " my father the very day after I arrived, and before " I had resigned myself to the idolatry of Donna " Seraphina, it was agreed that I should report I " had brought an invitation for my sister from a " friend, to return with me to England on a visit; " and, if it produced no decisive declaration from " Smyth, I was in fact to carry her away. The " scheme was successful. Smyth saw that he had " no hope but in marriage, and, being too deeply " enamoured of Harriet to let that prevent his ob- " taining her, declared himself. When I spoke on " the subject to him, he made some awkward ex- " cuses, with a countenance of chagrin for not being " more explicit; and having obtained my sister's " consent to their union, he pressed the immediate " celebration of their marriage with such earnest- " ness and disinterested ardour, that my father con- " curred, and, in the third week after my arrival at " Oporto, they were married by the chaplain of the " factory with due solemnity, and every requisite " authority.

" That he was a man of fortune, I told you had " been previously ascertained by my father, who, I " afterwards found, privately stipulated with Smyth, " that the receipt of Harriet's portion should be de- " layed till after his death: to which Smyth had " agreed, as it obviated the necessity of a settle-

" ment. Love, and the agreeable life they led, " united to induce the married couple to remain " some time at Oporto. They appeared to be very " happy; and Smyth's friendship for me seemed to " increase with his happiness. Meanwhile, my in- " fatuation augmented, and I lived but by the looks " and smiles of Donna Seraphina. A letter from " Fanny, while it made me easy in respect to the " health of my family, gave a sting to my heart, " which, however, was soon extracted by the magic " of Seraphina's eyes. Pleased to hear of all being " well at Eden-bower, I locked up Fanny's letter, " to avoid the pain I felt in reading her artless effu- " sions of love. When I was diverted from con- " fessing my marriage to my father, I fully intend- " ed to disclose it to my sister; but relinquished the " design from the consciousness of the situation of " my mind. I therefore continued to keep the se- " cret in my own bosom, till succeeding events de- " termined me to confide in Smyth."

CHAPTER XXII.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's history.

" MONTH after month glided away in sweet deli- " rium: Seraphina, her books, her music, her voice, " spread enchantment around me. For some time " our attachment seemed to continue pure; but at " length it assumed a character that involved me in " horrors. Both Don Alvarez and Donna Sera- " phina were extremely expensive in their manner " of living, and their finances began to be unequal " to their profusion. I frequently supplied her " with considerable loans; for my father continued

" my allowance: and for these loans I received " pressures of the hand, which were succeeded, on " subsequent loans, by pressures of the lips. Oh! " how dangerous to man is an unprincipled woman, " who, with beauty, has art enough to veil her de- " pravity! The nature of my passion became chang- " ed; she knew it, and was not offended; she knew " it, and seemed to pity me; she knew it, and re- " doubled all the arts of intoxication; and, though " she continued to talk of virtue, scrupled not to " bewail its restraints.

" By supplying Donna Seraphina with money, I " was at a loss to remit the usual allowance to " Fanny. Anxious not to apply to my father, who " was as uncommunicative as ever on the subject of " his affairs, in my perplexity I unbosomed myself " to Smyth, who lent me the sums I wanted, taking " my notes as memorandums. I had still virtue " enough to think periodically of supplying the " means of comfort to Fanny and her children, and " to frame plausible excuses for my absence and " the delay of acquainting my father with our mar- " riage: but, as to compunction, the horror of " my guilt was concealed from myself by the thought " of Fanny's ignorance of it, and by the violence of " my passion for Seraphina. Smyth sometimes " talked of going to England; against which I la- " boured to dissuade him myself, and procured my " sister's aid, till at length she was afraid to go to " sea till Edmund was born."—" What!" cried Arthur-William, " Edmund, that we saw the other " morning?"—" Yes, my dear boy," replied Mr. Cowper; " Edmund was born at Oporto, but he is not " the less an Englishman: children born abroad are " considered to belong to the country of their pa- " rents. About the time of his birth, I began to " observe that Fanny had not written to me for a

" good while; but it did not much engage my mind,
" as I knew she had every comfort about her, and
" as I was persuaded that nothing passing at Oporto
" could reach her but through me. From this pe-
" riod, Donna Seraphina kept me suspended be-
" tween the allurements of a guilty passion and the
" scruples of her virtue, in such a state of agitation,
" that I would have sacrificed my soul to her in
" any way.

" One evening, when my nephew was about two
" months old, I was sitting with my sister, who had
" him on her knee, while the nurse that suckled him
" stood by; she was an Englishwoman, whose hus-
" band was servant of one of the merchants of the
" factory. Harriet was very thoughtful, and I ob-
" served some tears drop from her eyes upon the
" child. Accounting for it from the natural tender-
" ness of a mother contemplating her infant, I took
" no notice of it at the time; and a note being
" brought to me from Donna Seraphina, desiring
" my company, I rose to go. Harriet then looked
" at me, and said, ' I wish you could have staid with
" me to-night: I have something to say to you; but
" it will do to-morrow.'—' If so, my dear Harriet,'
" said I, ' it *shall* be to-morrow; for I am par-
" ticularly engaged just now.' She smiled signi-
" ficantly, and I left her.

" I flew to Donna Seraphina, whom I found alone
" in her boudoir. She received me with a tender,
" but melancholy look. ' My dear Carlos,' said she,
" ' I expect Don Alvarez and your friend Smyth in
" a few minutes; they are only gone for my cousin
" Violante, and therefore I must make haste with
" what I have to say. I am much in your debt, my
" Carlos, but I am not uneasy about that; for next
" month Don Alvarez receives his revenues from
" his seigneurio of Pueblo, and I shall be able to re-

" turn the whole I have borrowed from you; besides,
" I should be unworthy of our tender friendship,
" could I, through pride, regret the testimonies of
" it. On the contrary, my dear Carlos, I rely upon
" it once more to save me from an embarrassment
" of the most dreadful nature.'—' Too lovely Sera-
" phina,' cried I, ' dispose of my purse, of my life;
" but have pity on my poor heart, and be not for
" ever adverse to my happiness.'—' For shame!
" Carlos,' said she; ' mingle not the raptures of
" love with the miserable concerns of money: as
" these indeed are proofs of your passion, I often
" think of them, nor is such a passion as yours
" always to be resisted; but, while the imme-
" diate object is gold, let us talk like merchants.
" All that you have advanced, or shall advance for
" me, shall be repaid from the Pueblo revenues;
" but, in the beginning of the next week, I must
" either pay for my diamond necklace and cestus or
" give them up, as it is not in Don Alvarez's power
" to let me have the money. I would not part with
" them for worlds!'—' I tremble, Seraphina,' said
" I, ' lest I should not have it immediately in my
" power to gratify your wish; but tell me the sum
" wanted.'—' Only six hundred moidores,' said she.
" —I turned pale. I had already exhausted my al-
" lowance, and had borrowed some hundreds from
" Smyth. ' Would to Heaven! Seraphina,' cried I,
" ' that I had the command of my father's strong
" chest! not an hour should elapse till I had brought
" you the sum. Alas! I must painfully confess to
" you that my own resources are at present very in-
" adequate to such a payment.'—' Well, my dear
" Carlos,' said she, with a sigh, ' it cannot be helped;
" but it will cost me many a pang; for I know they
" will be immediately bought by that envious crea-
" ture Donna Theresa de Lima; and you know they

" have been seen upon me more than once. Cannot
" you borrow a bag or two from your father? Is
" his chest full? Do you ever go to it?'—' My fa-
" ther,' replied I, ' is very reserved even to me re-
" specting his finances; but, though he never sends
" me to his chest, I often see him open it, nor does
" he scruple going to it before his acquaintance, and
" it appears well filled with bags of moidores.'—' O
" santa Maria!' exclaimed she, laughing; ' it would
" be delightful to borrow a couple of his bags with-
" out saying any thing to him about it! Now, do,
" Carlos, if you love me, do. Be assured you shall
" have them to replace in the course of next month
" from the revenues of Pueblo: he will never miss
" them.'—' You jest, Seraphina,' said I, ' he could
" not but miss them from the vacancy they must
" leave: besides, I never touch his key, and do not
" even know where he keeps it.'—' How unfortunate
" am I!' cried she.—' Perhaps,' said I, ' I may
" have the good fortune to procure the sum by other
" means; I will at least endeavour. You are to be
" at my father's to-morrow, and I will let you know.'
" She smiled, and pressed the back of her hand to
" my lips. Our tête-à-tête was here interrupted by
" the entrance of Donna Violante, with Don Alva-
" rez, Smyth, and the Italian music-master, whom
" Donna Violante had pressed into her service.
" She had herself a good voice, though not equal to
" her cousin's; and songs, duets, and trios, speeded
" the flight of Time.

" We supped, and it was late before we parted;
" but I was so anxious to gratify the wishes of Donna
" Seraphina, that I could not go to bed till I asked
" Smyth to add this advance to my former debt.
" He answered me in the most friendly manner,
" that it was at present out of his power; for, stay-
" ing at Oporto longer than he intended, he had

" been obliged to write to his agents, to deposit
" three thousand pounds more in the hands of his
" banker, and send a new letter of credit from him,
" which he expected by the return of the packet;
" and, if it would do then, it should be at my ser-
" vice. He spoke so kindly, and with such apparent
" candour, that it never entered my head to doubt
" the truth of what he said; and, conceiving I had
" inspired him with a friendship for me, I opened
" my mind to him without reserve, dwelling with
" raptures on the charms of Seraphina, and mention-
" ing the lively manner with which she instigated
" me to borrow a couple of bags from my father's
" strong chest. ' Admirable!' cried Smyth, laugh-
" ing; ' admirable! and why not? I see no harm in
" it; nor shall your mind have to feel any remorse;
" for, should Donna Seraphina fail to reimburse the
" strong box, you shall have the amount of the bags
" from me on the receipt of my letter.'—' Nay, but,
" my dear friend,' said I, ' to deceive my father!'
"—' Why,' returned he, ' he is not very open with
" you in these affairs; and I declare I see no crime
" in overhauling the dust, if you take care to do it
" without being discovered.'—Alas! I was now so
" far trained in wickedness as not to have my ear
" hurt by the axiom of vice, that discovery was the
" essential part of a crime and the most to be guard-
" ed against. After a little reflection, however, I
" told him that I did not think he was serious; and
" we soon after parted for the night.

" The thoughts of Seraphina's disappointment
" kept me awake all night; and I rose next morning
" unrefreshed and miserable. My father expected
" company, and with them Don Alvarez and Sera-
" phina. She was in spirits, and playful. Among
" other indifferent topics, she introduced a whim-
" sical dissertation on keys, comparing their various

" uses, from the little one that opened the trinket of " a heart on her finger, to the substantial one that " opened my father's strong box; and at last she " persuaded him to compare her's and his together. " She had communicated some degree of her spirits " to him, and he went and brought the key. After " a little rattle, apparently without meaning, she " suddenly put the key in her pocket, and held it " there in her hand. 'O! signor Cowper,' said " she, 'I am much obliged to you: I shall take care " of this key, and return it to you when I have made " the proper use of it.' Having trifled awhile, and " raised a laugh at my father, in which he joined " heartily, she took out her handkerchief and the " key together, and wiping it affectedly, said, with " a smile, 'Come, come, signor, don't be alarmed; " there it is, even brighter than when I pocketed it.' " She then returned it with infinite grace, singing a " verse of a song about a lock and key, as my father " went out of the room to put it up. While he was " out, she called Smyth to her, and gave him a flat " round box, which she took out of her pocket, say- " ing: 'I found your box this morning, and there it " is.' He thanked her, put it up, and shortly after " left the room. The day passed with our wonted " gaiety; except that I observed a slight gloom on " the countenance of my sister, with whom I had " not found an opportunity of explanation, which " indeed she now seemed to avoid. When I handed " Donna Seraphina to her sedan, she said to me in " a whisper: 'Let me see you to-morrow evening " about nine: I am engaged the whole day, but at " that hour I will return home alone.' She then " pressed my hand, and accompanied the pressure " with one of those seductive looks which had " already ruined the candour of my mind, and pre- " pared it for the easy admission of every vice. My

" dear children," continued Mr. Cowper, addressing his young friends, " be assured that candour is one " of the best centinels of rectitude and peace of " mind: the moment we begin to conceal our actions " from those who have a right to know them, we " have removed our principal guard, and left the " avenues open to the enemy.

" I was too much the slave of Seraphina to ne- " glect the appointment; and, such was my punc- " tuality, that I rang at the bell as she returned. " She received me with increased tenderness; and " I followed her to her boudoir, where I saw a seal- " ed packet on her table. ' Carlos,' said she, ' I " am going to put your love to the test; and, if it " prove as great as I think it is, there is no test to " which you may not put mine.' ' Name it, Sera- " phina,' cried I; ' for such a reward what would I " not do! Find me some instrument that will de- " molish the sides of my father's chest; or teach me " some chemical process that will dissolve the iron " case; I'll do it, and brave the consequences!'— " ' Silly Carlos,' said she, smiling, ' to think of " force: I should not deserve your love could I ex- " pose you to such certainty of a breach with your " father: no, no, there is no need of hammers or " chemistry; wit is the best instrument, and money " the best chemistry; a small mixture of them has " rendered a visit to your father's chest very easy " and safe.' As she spoke she opened the packet, " from which she took the box I had seen her the " evening before give to Smyth, and laid it down. " There remained something folded up, which she " held still covered, saying, ' This is the talisman, " which will suffice, by the gentlest application, to " make the lid of the box fly open. By means " of my chemical art, I procured it from a Cyclops: " take it; it possesses the quality of trying love.'

"I took this talisman, which, on unfolding the "paper, I found to be a key, the wards of which "were exactly the same as those of my father's. "I started: imaginary flights of passion gave way "before the reality of a deed at which I could not "but shudder. Compunction, however, was but "momentary; a look from Seraphina effaced it from "my heart. 'But, dear Seraphina,' cried I, 'though "this enables me to remove a bag, it does not secure "me from a discovery; my father will certainly "miss the number I take out.'—'What a novice,' "said she, 'is this Carlos of mine! it will be your "fault if he does. Here are a bag of counters; you "have only to exchange them for the coin: the "same bags being filled and placed lowest will re-"move every chance of their being missed for many "months; and the coin will be replaced in less than "two, from the revenues of Pueblo.' I was be-"wildered, and gave up my reason to this enchant-"ress. I even wondered at my fears, when there "was so little hazard of discovery, and when I was "so certain of returning the money soon, either "through the means of Donna Seraphina, or of my "friend Smyth. I could not help expressing my "surprise at her having a false key; at which she "laughed, and said, it was odd I should be surprised, "when she had procured it before my own eyes; "and she unravelled the whole mystery, by opening "the box that accompanied the key, where I saw "the wards of my father's key impressed on wax. "She had obtained the key by her humour, had made "the impression in her pocket on wax which she had "prepared for the purpose, and had given it imme-"diately to Smyth, whom, she confessed to me, "she had forced into a league with her, on his la-"menting his inability to let me have the money "soon enough. Smyth lost no time in carrying it

" to a locksmith, who, supposing himself only the " instrument of an intrigue, to which he was not un- " accustomed, received his Johannes, and produced " the key, without a grain of pity for the husband " who had not the art of securing a wife against all " keys, by placing the lock on her heart.

" While I remained with Donna Seraphina, my " resolution to perpetrate the deed never wavered, " and I thought only of the reward of my crime. I " urged her with the utmost ardour to put a period " to suspense; to which she replied, with one of " those irresistible looks of which she was perfectly " mistress, that Don Alvarez was going the next " day to spend a week at his *quinta* *, and that she " was not to accompany him. The images that at- " tended this declaration completed the intoxication " of my senses, and I was wound up to a pitch of " frenzy which might have impelled me to more hor- " rid crimes than robbery in the pursuit of my re- " compence. Donna Seraphina saw the intemperate " effects of my inebriation, and, fearing the return " of Don Alvarez before I could master my emo- " tions, she urged me to be gone, and at length " forced me away. I reached my father's door " without once abstracting my thoughts from the " charms of Donna Seraphina. I rung, and the in- " formation of my father being at home awakened a " new train of ideas. I could not bear to see him; " and, telling the servant that I was going to Mr. " Smyth's, I turned from the house without going in.

" As I walked, a conflict arose in my mind be- " tween duty and passion, in which the latter had " the better throughout, and was ultimately victori- " ous; soothing my conscience by determining first " to be re-assured by Smyth that he would enable

* A country-house.

" me to replace the two bags of moidores. For some " days he had been in treaty for a new carriage, to " make excursions into the country, and he had been " trying one that very day. We happened to stop " at his door precisely at the same moment; and, " instead of ringing, I got into the carriage and sat " by him. He laughed at my scruples, and again " assured me of the money. I think I see the vil- " lain now, squeezing my hand, talking of his con- " nection, expressing his friendship." After some " farther talk, in which he strove to remove my " scruples, he invited me to dine with him next day, " and we parted.

" I returned home, encouraging myself with the " certainty of replacing the money; and I had so " far argued myself into a contempt of what Smyth " termed my weakness, that I could bear to see my " father. I thought he received me with unusual " kindness. He was writing when I entered the " room; but, on seeing me, he put his paper into " his port-folio. After some common chat, he said: " 'I think, Charles, that you have been long enough " in Portugal. I am not sorry that the climate and " the society of Oporto have had charms enough to " make a year of your life pass so agreeably; but, " my son, it is all pleasure and no progress. Here " it is impossible you can connect youself: I wish " you had brought a wife with you.' He looked " mildly, yet fixedly, at me, as he said this: but, " though my conscience inclined me to detect in his " look an allusion to Fanny, I could not. 'As " you did not,' continued he, 'don't you think it is " time to go back for one? You know that I have " always placed great hope on your marrying pro- " perly.'—'My dear Sir,' said I, 'it is a circum- " stance that must be left to time and fate: I have " no thoughts of a wife at present.'—'I believe you,

" Charles,' replied he, with a look that now to my " mind became equivocal; ' but I am sorry while I " believe it, for you *should* think of one.'—' *Should!* " Sir,' said I, in great agitation, ' why *should?*'— " ' My dear boy,' replied he, calmly, ' wherefore " this emotion? Perhaps, on reflection, you may " think it your *duty*—when I have so repeatedly " expressed my wishes to you on the subject.' He " paused at the word *duty*, and I should certainly " have betrayed myself, had he not added his con- " clusion. ' I will not distress you on this point,' " continued he; ' take your own time. I feel, " Charles, that I have used you ill, in not being " more open to you on the subject of my fortune. " It is, perhaps, too late to repair my error; but it " is my intention to converse with you soon fully " on the situation of my affairs: in the mean time, " forgive me, I beseech you, for my former reserve, " and for the erroneous system I have pursued.' As " he spoke this he put out his hand, which I " pressed with warmth to my lips, intreating him " not to torture me by reproaching himself; for I " was sensible he had been all goodness to me. He " pressed my hand, and withdrew his. ' Tell me, " Charles,' said he, ' have you never thought it ex- " traordinary that I should keep so many bags of " money locked up at home in my chest, when it " might be otherwise disposed of to great advan- " tage?' That my father should take this night of " all others to ask me such a question, confounded " me. I believe I stared at him wildly, as if I was " sure he had penetrated my design. ' I own,' con- " tinued he, taking no notice either of my looks or " silence, ' that it is mysterious; but, when I tell " you that the chest contains a secret, the revealing " of which may be fatal to me, I am sure you will " not think me cruel in persevering in the mystery

" till I have fully matured the secret for your know-
" ledge; and, therefore, I shall only say at present,
" that all the contents of the chest are for your
" wife, let her be whom she may!' What a juncture
" for such a conversation! The ambiguity of the
" language kept my mind upon the rack; and, while
" it lasted, I was either dumb or incoherent. My
" father perceived the state I was in, but pretended
" to pass it unobserved; and, changing the conver-
" sation, managed to put me more at my ease be-
" fore we retired.

" In bidding me good-night, I thought he did it
" with a peculiar emphasis; but I again ascribed my
" perceptions to the suspicions of conscience. I
" shall never forget the war of emotions that raged
" in my mind when I was alone. The doubt of my
" father's knowledge of my marriage, his kindness,
" his dejection, his mystery, his secret, all raised
" a host of feelings to form ramparts of virtue around
" the chest; and, at first, I believed them impreg-
" nable. I resolved to relinquish the design. I
" locked up the false key and counters in my desk,
" I undressed, lighted my lamp, put out my taper,
" went into bed, and shut my eyes. I soon, how-
" ever, found that sleep was out of the question:
" the remembrance of my father's conversation by
" degrees faded away, and gave place to that of
" Donna Seraphina; the latter part of which revived
" in my imagination with double force, and brought
" with it an irresistible assemblage of charms.
" The ramparts fell before them one after another.
" I argued that my marriage must be unknown to
" my father, as he would not have continued to
" hoard his treasure had he been apprized of it; his
" kindness was a pledge of his forgiveness if he dis-
" covered me; his dejection I had observed upon
" my arrival: whatever his mystery consisted in

" should remain unexplored, and his secret should " be respected; for I would do nothing more than " change the moidores of two bags for counters, and " that with an expedition that should not give me " time to observe any thing besides in the chest. " Thus were the fortifications destroyed; but not " without a struggle, nor till Donna Seraphina's " image had so renewed my intoxication that I " would have sacrificed my life for her.

" The chest stood in a large light closet, situ- " ated between my father's room and that which I " occupied, having a door into each: in this closet " he wrote and kept his papers. A common brown " wainscot separated it from either room. I rose " gently and threw my wrapping gown about me. " As I lighted my taper, the clock of the neigh- " bouring convent struck three: the sound of the " first stroke so startled me, that I had nearly put " out both the taper and lamp. The tremor it pro- " duced continued upon me; I shook every limb. " On opening the door of my chamber which com- " municated with the closet, I perceived that my " father's door stood ajar: I listened, and heard him " distinctly breathe, as if he were in a sound sleep. " Having taken the key and the counters from my " desk, I tottered slowly and barefoot into the closet. " I advanced to the chest, and, setting my taper " down on a chair that stood by it, I attempted to " apply the key, but was some moments before I " could collect a sufficient degree of steadiness in " my hand to succeed. At length I fixed it, and, " turning it as softly as I could, raised the ponder- " ous lid. Guess my surprise when I found that the " treasure I wanted was secured by a second massy " door. My surprise was momentary; it yielded to " a guilty joy, on seeing the key lying on it. To " the key was tied a broad label, which I no sooner

" took up than these words struck my eyes: *Charles,*
" *I pity you! The contents of this chest are now all*
" *your own! the robbery you intended is converted*
" *into legal possession by my death! Look round!*
" I stood bent and aghast; Seraphina and all her
" charms vanished; horror took possession of my
" soul. " Look round!" thundered through my
" ear, in my father's voice, from a corner of the
" room. I involuntarily obeyed, and, as my eye
" caught his figure at his chamber-door, he raised
" a vial to his mouth. Wild as I was, his purpose
" flashed upon my thought, and I made a spring to
" dash the poison from his lips; but, instead of ef-
" fecting my design, I fell senseless at his feet.

" When I recovered my recollection, I found
" that my father had locked the chest, and was
" sitting near me with the two keys in his hand.
" 'Rise, Charles,' said he; 'I have no time to lose.'
" I rose as quickly as I could, and staggered to my
" own door. 'Where are you going?' cried he.—
" 'For medical assistance,' I replied as distinctly
" as I could.—'Come back,' said he; 'do not force
" me to anticipate the effects of the draught by
" speedier means.'—'To curse me thus! Sir,' cried
" I.—'It is to prevent your thinking so, Charles,
" that I detain you,' said he, mildly. 'No, my
" son, you are not to blame; you are not the cause
" of my death. I meant that the mode of it should
" alarm you; for I found you plunging into guilt:
" consider it, therefore, as a blessing; let it impress
" on your soul indelible resolutions never to be in-
" duced, by any temptation, to deviate a hair's
" breadth from the line of rectitude. I have long
" resolved on this action, for reasons of which I have
" left an account in my desk: this is the key; you
" will find it in a cover, directed to yourself. Mean-
" while take my blessing, and give me your forgive-

" ness before-hand, for the confession you will find
" there; as I forgive you for your clandestine mar-
" riage, and for the weakness that yielded to the al-
" lurements of artful beauty.'—' Oh, my father!'
" cried I, distractedly, ' live, I beseech you, if pos-
" sible: suffer me, oh suffer me to call in assistance,
" and to bring my sister and Smyth; there is yet
" time.'—' Charles,' said my father, relenting, ' I
" almost wish there were; for, as I begin to feel the
" power of the potion—its operation will be speedy
" —something here,' said he, striking his breast,
" ' tells me I have committed a dreadful crime. I
" took much pains to satisfy my reason; but a more
" powerful faculty now applies to be satisfied: your
" distress agitates me, and has awakened conscience.
" Oh! that I had continued to suffer the pangs of
" remorse, and left my fate with Him whose will it
" was that I should act my part on this stage of ex-
" istence! Let me, Charles, have the satisfaction to
" believe that the horror which I confess has seized
" me for this crime, may have the effect of securing
" you from it: swear to me, that nothing on earth,
" no passion, no mental torture, shall have power
" to instigate you to such a deed: this use of my
" crime may, perhaps, assist in its atonement.
" Swear!'—' I do, my father—but is it indeed too
" late?'—' Be assured it is; let us endeavour to be
" composed: come with me into my chamber.'—
" ' Will you not see my sister?'—' No; I must
" spare her.' ' Nor Smyth?'—' Smyth!' cried he,
" with a look of indignation; ' Smyth is a consum-
" mate villain. Unhappily he is married to your
" sister, whom you cannot forsake; but guard your-
" self against him, as you would against the Devil.
" Foul falsehood, hypocrisy, treachery, have the
" united dominion of his black heart. It was he be-
" trayed you to me; you will find his scrawl in my

" desk. He has disguised his hand; but, unper-
" ceived, I myself saw him yesterday deposit the
" letter on my table. It communicates your mar-
" riage, and the design to which you were urged by
" Donna Seraphina.'—I was too much confounded
" to speak.—' But come, my son, be firm, and at-
" tend like a man to the office that now remains to
" be performed. I have, perhaps, an hour or more
" to live: listen to my last request. The venom
" that is now beginning to circulate in my veins, I
" know, from seeing it tried by the vender, a Nea-
" politan doctor, on a spaniel, will terminate life
" with little pain, and no appearance of violence.
" As you regard my blessing, as you regard your
" own peace and that of your sister, take advantage
" of this circumstance to let the effect appear ac-
" cidental."

" The amazement which had bewildered my
" senses having subsided a little, my sensibility in-
" creased; I kissed my father's hand, and shed a
" shower of tears upon it. ' Now,' continued he,
" ' I think the horror of my mind would be relieved,
" if I could receive the blessed communion; and
" He, who knows the sincerity of my repentance,
" may look down with compassion on the last act
" of my life, and suffer it to be weighed against the
" guilt of suicide. Call up the servants; let them
" believe me suddenly taken ill; and dispatch one
" of them for the chaplain of the factory.' I hurried
" on my clothes and obeyed; and, in the mean
" time, my father went into bed. You will better
" conceive than I should paint the remainder of this
" scene; nor will I lengthen the account of it. Not
" only the chaplain, but the doctor came. The
" latter felt his pulse, put his questions, and knew
" not what to make of the case; but, at all events,
" prescribed an emetic. At the word emetic, I felt

"a hope revive; I thought it an interposition of "Providence, and I hastened the doctor away to "send the medicine. The chaplain now adminis- "tered the sacrament: I knelt by the bed-side, re- "penting my folly, forming resolutions, and conse- "crating my future life to virtue and religion; "yet while, at my father's desire, I participated the "communion with him, one of the most unchristian "passions, REVENGE, lurked at my heart. All my "better resolutions were still accompanied with the "thoughts of wreaking my vengeance upon Smyth; "and I believe that the contemplation of it mixing "with my distress, enabled me to support myself "through it. The crime of harbouring such a "passion, at the moment I was uniting in the most "solemn act, in remembrance of Him whose life and "precepts so fully inculcated its diabolical nature, "never occurred to me. At the conclusion of the "service, my father pressed my hand faintly, and "saying in a feeble tone, 'I am happier than I was,' "expired."

Mr. Cowper being here very much affected, ceased speaking, and Arthur brought him a glass of water; but not a word was said by any of the party; even Arthur-William was too much awed to break the silence of Mr. Cowper's pause.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's history.

THE sympathy of the party relieved the mind of Mr. Cowper, who, pleased with the feelings he had excited, resumed his narrative with confidence. "Conceive," said he, "the state of my mind dur-

" ing the remaining hours of the night, or rather " of the morning, afflicted as I was by the loss of " my father, and oppressed by the horrible secret " which he had charged me to keep, and which my " reason told me it would be wickedness and mad- " ness to reveal. The horror I felt was considerably " suspended by my meditating on the signal ven- " geance I meant to take on Smyth, and by con- " sidering the imbecility as well as villany of his " conduct; for I knew not how the wretch could " for a moment imagine that it was possible for " him to remain undetected, or to escape my resent- " ment. Alas! the sequel has proved how little I " conceived the depth of his arts.

" Distracted by the events of the night, and agi- " tated by a violent desire of revenge, I resolved " not to delay it: I had no compunction on the " score of his being my sister's husband; for, in the " excess of my rage, I thought to rid her of such a " serpent was to serve her, and, before it was light, " I wrote a note to him, in which I said nothing " more than that he was a villain, and that I should " expect to meet him in an hour at the Torro de " Marca. I dispatched it as soon as it was day by " a servant, whom I charged to call up Mr. Smyth, " and to deliver it into his own hands. While the " servant was gone, I finished a letter to my sister, " to be given to her in the course of the morning, " in which I begged her to be resigned, to perform " the last offices to my father, to make use of the " contents of his chest, to settle his affairs, and to " act with respect to herself with prudence, and " according to the event of my meeting with Smyth. " I was closing it when the servant returned with " my challenge, and a message that Mr. Smyth had " not been at home all night, but was expected " back to dinner that day.

" As my passion was not abated, I felt exceed-
" ingly chagrined and irritated; but, throwing the
" note into my father's desk, I took up the paper
" directed to me, and examined its contents. I
" will not lose time in repeating them at large to
" you: they were the principal events of his life,
" with the motives of his conduct, and apologies to
" me and my sister for the error he had fallen into
" in his mode of treating us. His expences had al-
" ways far exceeded his income, and, for some
" years past, he had been absolutely living on his
" principal, which was nearly at an end. His grand
" object was, that my sister and I should marry
" well; and he believed, for the paper was written
" previous to his knowledge of Smyth's villany,
" that he had obtained his desire so far as it respected
" her. As he found his money sinking, he resolved
" to leave England, and to endeavour to make
" amends for his former imprudence, by throwing
" part of what remained into trade; and, being in
" great friendship with a gentleman of the name of
" Horton, settled at Oporto, had gone thither on
" purpose for his advice and assistance. He had,
" however, formed no connexion before my arrival,
" nor did he afterwards: at the time of his death,
" his whole fortune was in his chest; nor would it
" have been inconsiderable, to have judged by the
" appearance of the bags, large and small, heaped
" end-ways one upon another; and it was for the
" sake of this appearance that he used occasionally
" to go to the chest before his friends; but very
" few of the bags contained money. Thus, in ad-
" dition to the discovery of the treachery of a pre-
" tended friend, and the arts of a mercenary mis-
" tress, the loss of my father disclosed to me the
" ruin of his fortune, and my reduction to poverty.

" The state of my mind was dreadful, and I in

" vain endeavoured to compose my spirits. As the
" morning advanced, I considered it as now useless,
" and indeed impossible, to conceal my father's death
" from my sister till my meeting with Smyth; and
" hoping for myself some ease from her sympathy, I
" sent for her. She was both surprised and affected
" at the event; but I left her ignorant of the truth
" for some time, as I had scarcely courage myself
" to reflect upon it. I made no scruple, however, of
" revealing to her the insolvent state of my father's
" affairs, the manner in which Donna Seraphina had
" practised on my heart, and the intention I had had
" of supplying her from my father's chest; but, not
" to wound her abruptly, I avoided at first speaking
" of Smyth.

" Having listened to me with great attention, she
" cast up her eyes and hands to Heaven, burst into
" a fresh flood of tears, and fell upon my neck.
" When her emotion suffered her to speak, she said:
" 'Oh, Charles! I feel for your situation, and for
" the state in which your mind must be: Would to
" Heaven! I could console you; but, alas! my dear
" brother, it is my fate to increase your misery.'—
" I fear, Harriet,' said I, 'that your marriage has
" not borne the test of time; that all its promised
" happiness has been consumed in a honey-moon.'
" —'Your fears,' replied she, 'are but too just. I
" have more than once had thoughts of throwing
" myself on my father's protection, and requesting
" him to effect a separation from the brute to whom
" I am unfortunately bound. The occurrences of
" yesterday evening had fully determined me to
" delay it no longer; but what will become of me
" now, Heaven only knows! Now that you are
" destitute, what hope can there be for me! Smyth's
" brutality will be increased too by finding that I
" have no fortune; for he has more than once made

" it the subject of sarcasm and abusive language. " You, my dear brother, ignorantly, have been more " than once the cause of his treating me ill. When " to you the hypocrite smiled and lent the sums " you borrowed, to me he preserved not the mask; " he dared to abuse both you and my father, pre- " judged our ruinous state, and lavished on me all " the rancour an inveterate, malignant heart could " suggest. I wished to have spoken to you before " your last application to him; but your engage- " ment with Donna Seraphina prevented me, and it " was made before I saw you again. On hearing, " which I immediately did, of its being unsuccess- " ful, I thought it needless to make you uneasy.'— " ' But, Harriet,' said I, ' was this friendly? was this " like a sister? to leave me in the dark, the fool of " such a villain?'—' My dear brother,' replied she, " ' you know him not; he is the Devil himself in " the shape of man. I obeyed him through dread: " I firmly believe that neither your life nor mine " would be safe, were he to imagine that I have ex- " posed his character to you. Last night, after your " conversation with him in the carriage at our door, " a dreadful scene took place between us. Oh, " such expressions! Where could a man find such " language! But the bitterness of words were not " all; he struck me violently!' "

Mr. Cowper's emotions at the time his sister spoke, could hardly have been more violent than were those of Arthur, at his recital of the fact. " Struck her!" cried he, starting up: " strike a woman! what a " scoundrel!"—" Be moderate, my dear Arthur," said Aubrey, " there are many brutes in the human " form treading the surface of the globe."—" Brutes! " sir," replied Arthur; " say devils."—" Smyth, as " my sister observed, was certainly one," said Cow- per. " To Arthur's indignation add the horror of

" my mind, and the rage excited by the recency of " the fact related by a sister in tears, and guess the " storm that agitated my soul. At one moment, I " gave vent to it in bitter epithets; at another, I " restrained myself, by reflecting how near ven- " geance was at hand; and to sooth my sister, who " was extremely alarmed at the passion to which I " had given way, I appeared to yield to her persua- " sions and arguments. I will not here dwell mi- " nutely on the circumstances she communicat- " ed to me; suffice it to say, that Smyth's passion " for her abated by degrees, and that at last he dis- " covered himself to be the worst of barbarians: " the rancour of his spirit extended even to his " child, whom, to increase her torments, he dashed " from her arms with violence, and loaded with " curses. You wonder that she concealed his treat- " ment of her: Harriet was timid, and the wretch " threatened her with the most horrid consequences " if ever the real state of the life they led were " known. Her knowledge of his hypocrisy, while " it surprised and disgusted her, galled him to the " soul; for he could not bear the consciousness of " there being an eye that observed the double part " he played."—" I suppose," cried Arthur-William, " that he did not think that God saw it too."—" In- " deed, my dear boy," said Mr. Cowper, " he did " not. The wicked mind only the eyes of men: as " God is invisible, they forget that he is present.

" After parting with me in the carriage at his own " door, Smyth went into his house, abused, and beat " his wife; first reviled me, then said I was to dine " with him next day, and ordered her to prepare a " dinner. He told her that he should go and pass " the night at the *quinta* of one of his Portuguese " acquaintance, but should return to keep his ap- " pointment next day; and commanded her, as she

" valued her life and mine, to support the mask he " chose she should wear. It was, however, no longer " supportable, and she had determined to throw it " off that very day. Harriet, aware of the conse- " quences, urged me with prayers, arguments, and " tears, not to act rashly, but to take time to con- " sider what was to be done both for her and my- " self: and, to relieve her distraction, I seemed to " agree that it would be better to postpone an ex- " planation with her husband. She staid with me " all the morning, but went home a little before the " hour she expected him back, in order to inform " him of my father's death, and of my inability to " leave the house.

" She was no sooner gone, than I again gave my " challenge to the man who had carried it before, " enjoining him to watch Smyth's return, and to " put it into his hands, if possible, before he entered " his house. I had no time to examine the money- " chest, and was too agitated to give directions about " my father's funeral, which I entirely trusted to my " sister; and which, as he was not a catholic, it was " necessary to conduct as privately as possible. I " continued an hour pacing my chamber, in expect- " ation of an answer from Smyth. Though my " revenge on him chiefly occupied my mind, " thoughts of Donna Seraphina combined to feed " the fire that raged within me. I no longer be- " held in her the angel that had charmed me, but " the mercenary tool and accomplice of the villain " who had detained me from my Fanny, abused my " inexperienced heart, and blasted my virtue. An- " other hour passed without tidings of my messen- " ger, for whose return I became more and more " impatient. Hour after hour elapsed, and the day " began to close, when I saw him cross the court- " yard with a letter in his hand, which I doubted

" not was the reply I wanted; but, soon entering
" my chamber, he delivered back the one he had
" received from me, informing me at the same time,
" that my sister was very uneasy at Mr. Smyth's
" delay. Unable to account for it myself, and not
" conceiving him so low-minded as to descend to
" the petty insolence of leaving me to wait his ap-
" pointment at dinner, which he never meant to
" keep, I muffled myself up in a cloke, under which
" I concealed my sword and pistols, and, taking ad-
" vantage of the dusk, hurried to his house. De-
" positing my arms and cloke in an outer room, I
" went to my sister, whom I found in tears over
" Edmund. I endeavoured awkwardly to console
" her, while the advance of night increased her
" alarm. Finding, on inquiry, that both his French
" servants had attended him, I began to suspect
" that he meant to complete his villany by desert-
" ing his wife and child. This apprehension abating
" the fury of revenge, by which for many hours I
" had been blinded, the folly of my putting him to
" death rushed upon my mind, and I saw at once
" the calamities to which I should have exposed
" my sister, totally unacquainted as we were with
" Smyth's affairs, which I did not doubt were so
" arranged as to deprive her of all hope of a resource
" from them. So inconsistent are the passions, that
" the meeting I ardently desired but a few minutes
" before, for an opportunity to cut his throat, I now
" as anxiously wished, for the purpose of assuring
" myself that my sister would not lose the advan-
" tage of his life, as he might be compelled in Eng-
" land to support her in a state of separation.

" We continued in this painful state of suspense
" till between nine and ten o'clock at night, when I
" determined to go and make an inquiry at the inn
" where he generally hired horses. There every

" doubt was soon removed: I saw the man who had " driven his carriage to the first stage on the north " road, where he had immediately taken fresh horses " for Braga; and, making both the Frenchmen get " into the carriage with him, determined to travel " all night."—" Good Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Aubrey, " what a thoroughpaced villain!"—" This " confirmation of my suspicion," proceeded Mr. Cowper, " came like a thunderbolt upon me, and al- " most deprived me of my senses. My poor sister " bore it with more resignation than I expected, " and indeed better than I did. We searched every " place in the house, in hopes of finding a letter " from him: not a word did he leave either in writ- " ing or by message. The servants were as much " surprised at the event as their mistress. He had " not only carried off his clothes, but every thing " of value belonging to him, leaving only what was " hired. After sitting some time longer with my " sister, I advised her to remain in the house till I " had considered what was to be done; and, obtain- " ing her promise to endeavour to compose herself " and be resigned, I again wrapped myself up as be- " fore in my cloke, and returned home, where I " wrote a few lines to Mr. Horton, the friend I " mentioned, urging him to come to me early next " morning, as it was my intention to consult him in " the dilemma in which both my sister and I so un- " expectedly found ourselves.

" Exhausted by the agitation I had suffered with- " out remission for so many hours, together with the " want of sleep, I was unable to sit up any longer, " and, throwing off my clothes, I went to bed. I " slept, but it was in a very disturbed manner; my " agitation was continued in dreams, and I awoke " next morning in a fever. Mr. Horton was in the " house, and came to my bedside; but, finding that

" I spoke incoherently, he advised me to keep my-
" self quiet, and to see a physician. From this time
" I recollect nothing that happened for ten days,
" when the crisis of the fever terminating in my fa-
" vour, my delirium abated, and I found my sister
" performing the part of a nurse to me. When I
" was sufficiently recovered to converse without
" danger, she informed me that my father was buried
" on the second day after I was taken ill, and that
" his funeral was attended by Mr. Horton and most
" of the gentlemen of the factory; that Smyth had
" drawn every shilling out of the hands of his mer-
" chant, and had been heard of at Corunna, where
" he had embarked in a vessel for Bordeaux; that
" he had, however, paid all his debts at Oporto,
" with the rent of the house he occupied for the
" month entered upon; that she had given it up to
" the landlord, and had come immediately to me.
" She told me likewise that Donna Seraphina had
" set out with Don Alvarez de Monocella the day
" after my father's death for Del Pueblo, without
" fixing any time for their return to Oporto.

" My recovery was considerably retarded by the
" pangs I felt on account of my conduct to Fanny:
" I confessed my folly and wickedness to Harriet,
" and formed a thousand resolutions of atonement.
" The bitterness of self-reproach was softened by
" the friendly, affectionate arguments of my sister;
" and I began to flatter myself that my lovely, in-
" nocent Fanny would think and speak in the same
" manner. My pure passion for her again took
" possession of my heart with redoubled force; I
" longed to be once more at Eden-bower, to obtain
" her pardon on my knees, and to embrace the little
" pledges of our love, one of whom only I had seen.
" These happy anticipations were interrupted by
" reflections on the silence of my wife, whose cor-

" respondence had ceased for a long time; nor were " the fears it created now to be removed or les- " sened by the blind devotion of my heart to an un- " worthy object. Sometimes a dread of the worst " would seize my soul, and I became frantic at the " thought. Neither Harriet nor I had any further " ties to bind us to Oporto; and, being resolved to " quit it as soon as possible, every day appeared an " age that deferred the bliss I by turns painted to " my fancy as reserved for me at Eden-bower. As " soon, therefore, as I was able to undertake busi- " ness, I entered into a thorough examination of my " affairs, which I found to be in a very deplorable " state. All the money left by my father was not " enough to discharge the remaining debts; and I " should not have been able to leave Oporto but for " the generosity of his friend, Mr. Horton, to whom " I fully communicated my situation, not omitting " my marriage, and the little settlement I had made " on Fanny and her children. The worthy man " proposed to arrange and settle every thing for me " at Oporto, to advance me a sum of money suffi- " cient to carry my sister and myself to England, " and to take my bond for the amount, which he " kindly said he had not a doubt I should in a little " time be able to pay. He was scandalized at the " conduct of Smyth, but imagined, as he was a man " of such fortune, that, by a mere application to his " banker, I should find him when he returned to " England, and be able to obtain a provision for his " wife and child; for which purpose he advised that " my sister should carry home the certificate of her " marriage, with additional attestations. This ad- " vice of course she followed. I executed a bond " for five hundred pounds sterling to the generous " Horton, of whom we took an affectionate leave; " and, having engaged a passage in a ship bound to

" Bristol, having obtained a memorandum from " Smyth's merchant of the names of the bankers in " London who had given his credit, names of the " first respectability, and having taken leave of all " from whom I had received civilities, I embarked " with my sister and Edmund; my heart divided " between regrets for the shameful life I had spent " at Oporto, and hopes of a virtuous and happy one " at Melford."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Continuation of Mr. Cowper's history.

Mr. Cowper's story proving longer than he suspected it would, he again apologized for the circumstantial manner into which he was led by his feelings, and proposed to defer the rest of it; but against this the party unanimously declared, and he proceeded thus:

" During the passage my sister and I mutually " consoled each other, and laid plans for the future. " To me the most pleasing of our conversations " were those of which Fanny was the subject: my " passion seemed to increase as I approached nearer " to its object; and, suffering my ear to be beguiled " by the friendly effusions of my sister's affection, " I lost sight of my crimes, and yielded my soul en- " tirely to the delightful hope of being happy with " my Fanny. For many days before we landed I " thought of nothing but her; I continually painted " her to my imagination in all her charms of mind " and person, and I defied the malice of fortune. " With what pleasure did I again behold the shores " of Old England; and how did it increase as the

" rich fields of Devon and Somersetshire seemed to
" dart past the ship as she steered with a fair wind
" for the mouth of the Avon, into which we found
" the tide pouring rapidly! Without delay we en-
" tered the river. How sweetly did I recognize the
" well known objects of its romantic banks, where
" I had spent many a happy hour with my Fanny!
" As we passed the Hot-wells, my eyes eagerly ex-
" amined every face upon the walk, as if they ex-
" pected to meet hers; and, when I reflected that
" she might have been there, had I given her notice
" of my sailing, I reproached myself for the loss of
" the hours that were to intervene between that
" moment and my arrival at Eden-bower. While
" at a distance, I had been too busy in painting the
" happiness of home, to think of bringing her from
" it; but I repented the blindness of my avarice of
" joy, when my senses convinced me that we might
" have met sooner. I consoled myself, however,
" with the thought of having her in my arms, and
" pressing her to my bosom, before the day was
" over; and I determined now to enjoy the conceal-
" ment of my return from every creature, till I
" knocked at my cottage and imparted it to Fanny
" herself.

" At Bristol I carried my sister to an inn, where,
" seeing her and Edmund well accommodated, I
" left her to take charge of our baggage; and, pro-
" mising to return to her next day with Fanny, set
" out at two o'clock in a post-chaise for Thornbury.
" I had now been absent more than a year; but
" every hedge, every tree, every house, recalled the
" past events of my life, and blended them with the
" present hour: I felt as if I had seen all the ob-
" jects that presented themselves only the day be-
" fore; but my impatience to behold my Fanny
" seemed to increase the distance from one mile-

" stone to another, and, though the post-boy drove " rapidly, I thought him long upon the road. I met " many persons whose faces were familiar to me; " and, notwithstanding my resolution to conceal " myself, I could not help giving them a cordial nod " as I passed; for they were the animated memo- " rials of happy days. Sometimes I continued for " many minutes absorbed in contrasting the delight " of an innocent passion with the horror of a guilty " one; at others, in figuring my reception at Eden- " bower: now I made speeches for Fanny, and now " I protested my love with all the original ardour of " my heart.

" These reveries lasted till the chaise was near " Thornbury, when I stopped the post-boy to desire " him to drive through a lane, by which he might " avoid the town, and to put me down at the stile " which led over the fields to Melford. When he " stopped opposite to it, and opened the chaise-door, " my mind and feelings were so occupied by the re- " collections it awakened, that I could hardly give " the little attention that was necessary to settle " with him. By the warmth of the post-boy's thanks, " I imagine I greatly overpaid him: but I was sit- " ting on the stile where I saw Fanny come from " the opposite one with her wooden bowl and bottle " of water, her white towel and piece of soap: where " she first perceived that my arm was broke, shed " tears, and blessed me. I sat no longer, however, " than while I took out my purse and discharged the " chaise. I now trod the foot-path where I saw her " insulted, where she caught me by the arm, and " besought my protection; where I fought her bat- " tle, and lost my Virgil; where I first admired her " beauty and the native graces of her virtuous emo- " tions, while the features of her face and the pos- " ture of her person were governed by gratitude

" mingling with self-reproach. With the loss of my " Virgil I associated the finding of it, the artless " confession of my Fanny's love, her exclamation of " 'What! your virtuous wife!' the first kiss I stole; " and one happy idea ushering in another, my ima- " gination had proceeded to the wedding-day, the " whole village decked in white and gay clothes, " following us to the altar, when I was suddenly " roused from my rapturous trance by the sound of " the village church-bell.

" The air was still, the sky serene; it was a Sab- " bath evening in the middle of June: I was rising " the slope, at the top of which the view of the village " opens on the sight. I now wondered that I had " met none of the villagers strolling: the thought " oppressed my mind; and the melancholy, solemn " sound of the bell, which I soon perceived was " tolling the forsaken frame of some departed spirit " to its grave, inspired a gloom, which I endeavour- " ed in vain to disperse by thinking of joy and " Fanny. Reaching the summit of the ascent, I " saw the vivid images of my wedding scenes, which " I had been so rapturously contemplating, com- " pletely contrasted by a long procession of mourn- " ers, blockading the avenue to the church. All " the inhabitants seemed to be gathered together: " except in the line of this gloomy train, not a " human creature was to be seen; and, though the " trees and fields wore their finest verdure, an uni- " versal dulness pervaded the country; a general " silence, like that of night, prevailed, rendered " more awful by the solemn interruption of the loud, " single sound of the funeral bell, returning on the " ear after long and equal pauses. It was a scene " to damp the most ardent joy. The contagion of " sorrow seized my heart: the general affection, " evidenced by the general attendance, showed the

"loss to be no common one; it might be the ve-
" nerated Grey himself, whose soul had flown to
" Heaven. I was confirmed in this opinion by the
" full concourse of his parishioners. Sure of finding
" my Fanny among them, I resolved to join them.
" My clothes were indeed unsuitable to the occa-
" sion; but, to the spirit of Grey, my heart would
" appear in mourning: yet even that could not be
" requisite, for he was removed to a state of sainted
" bliss. I might mourn justly for his flock, to whom
" he had been a true shepherd; but for him I should
" rejoice. Dwelling on his general virtues, and re-
" calling to mind his particular goodness to myself,
" I approached with double speed. As the bier
" entered the western door of the church, I was
" near enough to distinguish the faces of my friends;
" and, as I neither saw Fanny nor the Cowsels, I
" imagined they had already gone in. I flew to the
" small door that opened into the south aisle: I
" there overtook a lad who knew me well; but, in-
" stead of replying to my question respecting the
" person whose funeral it was, he stared at me with
" surprise, and ran away to another door. His con-
" duct alarmed me. I entered the church trembling.
" Grey himself was in the reading-desk. My heart
" now palpitated violently: my eyes sought Fanny
" every where; the people, crowding the pews, gazed
" at me with consternation. I saw Cowsel, his son,
" and daughter, standing on one side of the body,
" and Mrs. Grey with two ladies on the other; but I
" could see Fanny no where. The most horrid
" thought that could arise now took possession of
" my brain. I forced my way to the bier: 'Where,'
" cried I, seizing Cowsel by the arm, 'where is
" Fanny?' He turned from me without a reply;
" and at that moment I heard Grey's voice raised to
" pronounce emphatically: *Thou hast set our mis-*

" *deeds before thee; and our secret sins in the light* " *of thy countenance.* It spoke the truth to my " frantic soul; and, at the same instant, I cast my " eyes on the plate of the coffin, which answered " my inquiry: it answered me—*Here she is; you* " *shall behold her no more!* I remember that I grasp- " ed the coffin in my arms; I remember that I again " heard the thunder of Grey's voice cry, ' Take that " madman away:' I remember no more."

CHAPTER XXV.

Conclusion of Mr. Cowper's history.

The hearts of the Aubreys accompanied Mr. Cowper through the various feelings he had experienced. He designedly, though imperceptibly, led them into the gradual variation of his own emotions at the time the events took place. They had alighted with him at the style, on the Thornbury road; they had recalled to mind Fanny's activity in producing the apparatus to wash from his face the blood that had been drawn in her cause; they had renewed the battle, and shuddered at the first toll of the bell that had struck his ear. From that moment they had dreaded the event, yet admitted, as he had done, a hope, though slighter than his, that the funeral might be Mr. Grey's rather than Fanny's. Fear of the truth, however, predominated, and the tears prepared by their sympathy began to flow as soon as they heard that Grey himself performed the service. The awful verse from the psalm, the dreadful information from the coffin wrung their hearts; they mourned, they wept bitterly for Fanny. Mr. Cowper had ceased to speak, and there was a pro-

found silence for some minutes: at length Aubrey rose, and rang the bell for tea. Cæsar came in, and said it was ready in the drawing-room. Mrs. Aubrey, Emily, and Arthurina, with Arthur-William, went up to the nursery to recover themselves, leaving Arthur, with his father and Mr. Cowper, walking up and down the parlour, each intent on his own contemplations.

When they all met again at the tea-table, and had resumed some degree of ease: "My dear friends," said Mr. Cowper, "my desire that you should know "me, and take an interest in me, for the rest of life "has induced me to make you acquainted with my "sad story; let the interest I feel for you make "amends for the pain I have inflicted."—"The "pain of sympathy," said Aubrey, "is always at-"tended with a kind of charm, by which it is in-"finitely more than compensated; pray take your "tea and proceed."—"I long to know," said Arthur, "what became of that villain Smyth."—"And I," cried Arthur-William, "to hear about "little Fanny." Mrs. Aubrey and the girls made kind enquiries respecting Mrs. Smyth and Edmund's sister, and when they thought that Mr. Cowper was sufficiently refreshed, they one and all begged him to finish his story, which he accordingly thus resumed:

"The sudden transitions of hope and fear ter-"minating so dreadfully affected my brain; I was "seized, and carried raving out of the church. I "continued in a state of insanity nearly three "months, and it was not till long after, that my "sister ventured to inform me of the real circum-"stances of Fanny's death. I had been removed "to Bristol, and put under the care of a person who "undertook the charge of the insane. My sister, "surprised at my not returning to her according to

" my promise, had found me by enquiring at Mel-
" ford. She was at no loss, as my money remained
" in her hands, and receiving hopes from the fa-
" culty, that my malady would yield to time and
" proper treatment, she paid me unremitting atten-
" tion. I will not dwell minutely on the inform-
" ation I received from her, when she had ascer-
" tained that I was sufficiently recovered to bear it.
" I think of it daily; I think of it for a wise purpose;
" and some day, I will show you a packet of letters,
" and a journal, that shall excite your admiration;
" but time will not allow it at present. The same
" devil that had tempted me at Oporto, had been
" working my destruction at Melford. The history
" of my infatuation, with some empassioned letters
" I had written to Donna Seraphina, was fully con-
" veyed to Eden-bower by Smyth, who, it was now
" clear to me, had contrived to intercept all my
" Fanny's letters, copies of which she had kept, and
" which, with mine to Donna Seraphina, an anony-
" mous one from the villain who transmitted them,
" and her own journal from the day we parted, formed
" the contents of the packet delivered to me by my
" sister. The beginning of the journal was full of
" effusions of love, and ardent anticipations of my
" return; these were echoed by her letters; the
" other part contained the tenderest lamentations
" for the loss of my heart, which she felt it was im-
" possible to survive, always ending, however, with,
" *but I forgive you Charles, may God also forgive and*
" *bless you!* The state of her mind brought on a
" miscarriage at an advanced period of her preg-
" nancy; she sunk into a melancholy, from which
" she never recovered. Her mother had consulted
" Grey, who had written me an admonitory letter,
" which it seems had been also intercepted; and my
" conduct had been reprobated at Melford, where I

" was become an object of detestation. Such was " the curse that a perfidious man and an artful " woman had brought upon me; or rather, such was " the miserable consequence of my own folly and " guilt.

" I now resigned every thought of happiness in " this world; I wished myself in another; but bear- " ing in mind my father's last injunctions against " suicide, I resolved to devote the rest of my life to " repentance, and to strive to deserve by that a re- " union with the blessed spirit, whose society in the " present state of existence I had forfeited. I trust " I have kept my resolution; I trust I have expi- " ated. I am waiting patiently my release, endea- " vouring to fill up the intervening time as well as " I can."—" But what," cried Arthur, " became of " the villain who was the cause of all this misery?" —" I never saw him afterwards," replied Mr. Cow- per, " and it is very surprising that I have never " been able to trace his person farther than Corunna, " where I told you he embarked for Bordeaux. Nor " has it been the effect of negligence; I have done " every thing in my power to find him. The Bank- " ers who furnished him with credit at Oporto, had " not the least knowledge of him; the sums were " placed in their hands by an agent, with whom they " were also unacquainted, for which he received " letters of credit to the amount, payable to Smyth. " The letters of introduction which he had procured " at Oporto from persons on the Continent, had mere- " ly been in consequence of the figure he had made " wherever he stopped for a time. I have pursued " a hundred different Smyths without success: nay, " he negotiated the notes of hand I gave him in " Portugal, and I could not trace him by the holder " of them, who had received them from a foreigner. " In short, I think he must have come to some un-

" timely end; if not, he has so completely envelop-
" ed himself, that, added to the commonness of
" the name, he has hitherto escaped every search.

" Having lost the friendship of the good vicar of
" Melford, and dreading to return to a spot where
" every object would renew excitement to the
" malady from which I had just recovered, I
" resolved at first to avoid Gloucestershire, and all
" that could endanger the intellect; but sorrow
" and repentance, those corroding inmates of the
" guilty heart, were pleasing to mine; because,
" though I had been guilty, mine was not the guilt
" of depravity, not the guilt of a deep designing
" spirit. I had been misled; my soul had been
" enthralled by the appearances of virtue and friend-
" ship; and I was lost before I detected the
" masks. Happiness, what I had figured to myself
" as happiness, all that could have endeared ex-
" istence to me, had my Fanny lived to bless me
" with pardon and with love, was withdrawn from
" the prospect of life, which was now to be endured,
" not enjoyed. For the ideas of bliss I substituted
" those of utility and resignation. I united my
" sister's lot with mine; I adopted her children, for
" she had a daughter born in England, about six
" months after our arrival, and I resolved to turn my
" poverty to account, by making it the nurse of
" fortitude and justice. I had some hard struggles;
" but by the strictest adherence to frugality, by cur-
" tailing the circle of wants, by considering debt
" as a worse evil than hunger or rags, I gained the
" victory.

" It would be endless to tell you the severe trials,
" as well as petty mortifications which I found
" attendant on penury. I shall briefly give you
" an account of what happened to me in con-
" sequence of the debts I contracted at Oporto.

" Though both Grey and Cowsel were too much
" offended to admit, and I too conscious to attempt, a
" justification of my conduct; yet, they were too
" good, and too much attached to my Fanny, to
" forsake the interests of her child: they therefore
" gave me to understand, that they should not
" resign the trust of the settlement I had made, and
" Cowsel promised to continue assisting my mother-
" in-law, in the management of the little farm, on
" condition, that I suffered her granddaughter, my
" little Fanny, to remain with her. My answer
" was, that when I recovered fortitude enough to
" see my child, I certainly would, and that I should
" then be determined by circumstances; but, that
" it was neither my intention, nor my inclination, to
" take her from Mrs. Ross. Cowsel was not a man
" to raise scruples, and he continued his assistance.
" By good management, the farm produced on an
" average from eighty to a hundred a-year; this by the
" settlement now belonged to me: but I consented
" to share it with my mother-in-law, while she had
" the care of my child, taking rather the larger
" part, as she would now again resort to her own
" annuity, and as I had to take care of my sister and
" her two children, who were infants.

" Reflecting on the difficulty of living on such a
" pittance, and remembering my debt to the worthy
" Horton of Oporto, I made my situation known to
" several of my father's friends, and also to Neville's
" family; Neville himself was gone abroad on his
" travels, and I hoped that some of them would in-
" terest themselves to put me into a situation which
" I might fill with credit, and by which I might be
" supported like a gentleman. All I gained by my
" application was a practical lesson, the theory of
" which I had learned in books, without retaining a
" sufficient impression of it to deter me from adding

" myself to the list of unqualified suitors: I was re-
" ceived with smiles, dismissed with advice, and
" deprived of my *entrée* at every house where it
" was heard that I was seeking the exertion of
" influence. This was not the worst; I was imme-
" diately marked out for calumny; I was said to
" have ruined myself by extravagance; my passion
" for Donna Seraphina was told against me, with all
" the exaggerations of malevolence. I was reported
" to have taken in a young man to marry my sister,
" to have ruined him, and caused his death by
" driving him to despair; in short, every incident
" that could be distorted to apersion was armed
" against me.

" Friendless and sad, I took lodgings in the sub-
" urbs of London, consisting of a parlour and two
" small bed-rooms. Here, assisted by Harriet, I
" gloried in enduring the rigour of fate; I thought
" daily of Fanny, and of my own conduct, and justi-
" fied Providence, whose chastisement proceeded
" from order and benevolence; while I despised and
" hated the world, whose malevolence was not the
" result of justice, but the operations of a cor-
" rupt association of ideas combining with base
" passions.

" About two years after my arrival in Eng-
" land, a change took place in my situation,
" from my notes to Smyth being brought against
" me. As I was not able to take them up, I was
" arrested and carried to the Fleet-prison. In
" going in, I met a gentleman coming out, whom I
" remembered to have seen at Oporto, and who left
" it about a fortnight after my arrival there. He
" seemed to know me, yet evidently avoided a
" recognition: he was not the first acquaintance
" who had coolly passed me by, and I had long
" ceased to be mortified; but I was unjust in the

" motives of this young man, from whom I received " a letter the next day, requesting permission to pay " me a visit, and who had passed me unnoticed, only " through fear of hurting my feelings.

" His name was Searle; I say was, for he died " about two years ago; he was a nephew of Dr. " Searle's, the rector of Mariton; and having been " delighted with some civilities he received from " my father in Portugal, was anxious to return " them to me. He expressed a desire to serve me; " this I told him was impossible, but he would not " be refused. In short, after hearing my story, " with most of which he was previously acquainted, " he assured me that, though he could not heal the " wounds my heart had received, it would be my " own fault if I were not set to rights with regard " to money-matters. ' The notes to Smyth, and " your bond to Mr. Horton,' said he, ' must be " taken up and consolidated.' I told him that I " had not the means. ' But I have,' replied he, " ' and you may hereafter contrive some mode of " discharging the debt; at present, I have taken " the liberty to bail you, and we will settle the " terms at leisure. I am lately from Oporto, and " can give you the satisfaction of knowing, that " Donna Seraphina de Monocella is universally de- " spised. After your departure, she returned to the " city, where she laboured with all her power to " blacken your character, particularly charging you " with the dishonour of unfounded boasts: but no " credit is given to her by the English, and even her " own countrymen associate with her as little as " possible. Perhaps you do not know,' continued " he, ' that your friend Horton is dead. He was " carried off by an apoplexy about three months " ago, and your bond is either here already, or on " its way to be put in force against you.' I assured

" Mr. Searle, that I had no property in the world " to give him as a security, except a life-interest in " the produce of a few acres of ground, which was " fully employed in the bare maintenance of five " persons. ' How stands your fund of Greek and " Latin ?' said he. ' Have you any objection to " mortgage that as a security ?'—' I understand " you,' replied I: ' perhaps, a short brushing up " would make me as fit for a tutor as nineteen in " twenty that undertake the task of tuition, but I do " not think my conscience would allow me.' ' I'll " relieve your conscience,' said he: ' my uncle is " guardian to two orphans, who will have tolerable " fortunes when they come of age: their capacities " seem to be very confined; but he is of opinion, " that if a man can be found who will consider them " more as his sons than his pupils, their intellects " may be drawn forth; the one is thirteen, the " other fourteen years old. I am in quest of such a " man as my uncle wishes for; and indeed, I came " hither yesterday after a gentleman, who having " other views on the arrangement of his affairs, de- " clined the offer which I now make to you. You " must comply,' continued he, ' for you are not ex- " pected to make them profound scholars; and if " you should even fail in the attempt to enlighten " their minds, the blame will still be cast upon nature " rather than on you. On this plan two hundred " a-year will be given with each of them.' I thanked " Searle from the bottom of my heart, and agreed to " make the trial.

" To be brief, for I have already indulged my " garrulity too much, I received the boys: they lived " with me about six years, and I had the satisfac- " tion to see them turn out amiable and intelligent " young men. I thought this alone a great reward " for the pains I had sincerely bestowed upon them;

"but, in addition, by living on three hundred a-
"year, my whole debt to Searle was cleared off,
"and I secured the cordiality and friendship of the
"rector of Mariton."

"But you have said nothing of little Fanny;"
said Arthur-William. "I am afraid, my dear boy,"
replied Cowper, "to enter upon the subject. About
"two months after my recovery of reason, I thought
"I could bear to see her without danger; I went to
"Eden-bower in disguise; I discovered myself only
"to my mother-in-law, with whose concurrence I
"contrived to remain concealed in the house four-
"and-twenty hours. What I felt on entering the
"house, and at the sight of my child, is not to be
"described—let it pass—I tore myself away—I paid
"her another visit, and another. In short, I found
"that I could not live without her, and about the
"time that Searle made me the offer of my pupils,
"I sent my sister to Melford, to propose to Mrs.
"Ross, that she and Fanny should live a part of the
"year with us.

"Harriet was not satisfied with barely executing
"her commission; she saw Grey and Cowsel, she
"told them my story, described the arts that had
"been practised to seduce me, and painted my re-
"pentance. She softened their hearts, and, aided
"by their religion, obtained my forgiveness. Grey,
"the benevolent, the pious, the excellent Grey,
"wrote me a few lines with his own hand; his
"words were—'Misguided, unfortunate man! I
"believe your repentance to be sincere; come and
"finish your expiation at the grave of the angel
"you have lost: come, and by attention to her
"child and to your future life, endeavour to con-
"firm your redemption, and to merit a re-union
"with the blessed saint in a world where there is

" no corruption; come to your home, and be com-
" forted.'

" Time, though it produced no alteration in my
" heart or recollection, respecting my beloved
" Fanny, fortified my nerves. Objects that would
" once have plunged me into despair, or over-
" whelmed me with madness, tempered my sorrow,
" soothed and delighted me. I accepted Grey's in-
" vitation; I removed to Eden-bower with my sister
" and her children, and there I trained my pupils.
" My mind assumed a kind of melancholy happi-
" ness, in which I resisted depression by attaching
" all earthly bliss to the pursuit of the will of HIM,
" whose chastisements are blessings; and particu-
" larly in attention to my little Fanny's under-
" standing, which I cultivated with all my power;
" at the same time that I endeavoured to form her
" soul to such enjoyments on earth, as should pre-
" pare her early for those to which her angelic mo-
" ther had been removed. I was successful—the
" soil was of the best kind—I was successful beyond
" my warmest hopes.

" She had the start in years of her cousins, whom
" she delighted to lead in the path she had taken.
" To my sister she owed the progress she made
" in music, and the ease and grace of her carriage:
" with my assistance, she became acquainted with
" herself; with the passions of the heart, the facul-
" ties of the mind; and she sedulously and eagerly
" devoted her powers to rectifying the former, and
" cultivating the latter. Oh! she was eminently
" successful in both. She was ambitious of excel-
" lence, without envy or emulation. Her anger was
" without sin, she had discarded from it every de-
" gree of rage, revenge, retaliation, and sullenness;
" it was but an animated disapprobation of error.

" She had learned to temper fear and grief by re-
" signation; and hope, and joy, were removed from
" the dominion of fancy, to that of reason. Hatred
" of vice was unattended with malevolence to the
" person; and genuine love and modesty banished
" pride, and vanity, and jealousy. She aspired not
" to the masculine walks of science; but in her
" pursuit of pleasing as well as of important know-
" ledge, she was content, after satisfying her under-
" standing in some points, to take much upon trust
" —much she relied on her father. Her memory,
" imagination, judgment, unfolded themselves gra-
" dually, but strongly. She was daily adding to
" the stores of her mind.

" In her person she resembled her mother; I was
" always told, and believe, that in her face she re-
" sembled me. I early made her acquainted with
" my history, and often took her with me to visit
" her mother's grave, over which I had placed a
" simple urn on a pedestal. Sorrow had yielded
" much to the force of parental affection, when my
" second Fanny was old enough to feel an interest
" in her mother's tomb; and I refrained from weep-
" ing, when we went together. Once, however,
" when I thought myself alone, she came upon me
" unawares, and found me bathed in tears. She
" embraced me, and mingled hers with mine. I
" indulged the sensation. I accused myself to my
" child—I wept upon her neck. Finding my agita-
" tion increase, she stifled her own emotion, and
" looking at me with the impressive countenance of
" a seraph, said: 'My dear papa, this is very wrong;
" you say you think, that the spirits of those who
" love us, delight in viewing us; surely it cannot
" be to see us in pain; long have you been forgiven
" by the beloved spirit, in thinking of whom you are
" so afflicted: this agitation may be a species of in-

" gratitude to her. Oh! cease to court affliction, " and let us in future think of her, and speak of " her with joy, as being far happier than we could " make her here.' I ceased to weep; I blessed the " good sense and piety of my child, and from that " moment I yielded to the dictates of wisdom, to " court affliction no longer.

" In time I forgot the misery I had merited. As " Fanny advanced in life, a new generation grew up " with her at Melford. She won the hearts of old " and young. I was again included in their smiles. " My sister and the Smyths, resigned to their lot, " enlivened our habitation. Our mornings were " devoted to mental improvements, our evenings " sometimes to the perusal of works of imagination, " sometimes to music and dancing, and not unfre- " quently to neighbourly meetings, and familiar " talk, in which good humour prevailed, and no " one feared a critic. Happiness once more took " possession of Eden-bower.

" Happiness is a fickle tenant; she staid but a " few years with me. When Fanny had attained " her eighteenth year, a sudden, incomprehensible " malady, of the nature of which I am to this day " ignorant, deprived me of my child—of my friend " —of such a friend as seldom falls to the lot of " man. I have no idea of any affection so perfect, " or so well founded, as the friendship that subsisted " between us. It was distinct from the fondness of " father and daughter, though heightened by it. " It was intellectual sympathy. It was a similar " comprehension of things, similar conceptions, " similar pursuits, unbounded confidence. It is " only by reflecting on the nature of such a friend- " ship that my loss can be estimated. Oh! most " gladly would I have relinquished every comfort " of life to have perserved her. The progress of

" her dissolution, though sure, was tardy; but " though attended with intolerable sufferings, she " bore the dreadful trial without a murmur. Her " fortitude and resignation must have excited the " admiration of angels. No complaint escaped her " lips. She was long sensible that she was ap- " proaching her end, and one evening as she ob- " served from her bed a bright planet, which ap- " peared through the window of her chamber, she " desired her aunt to look at it, saying; 'Papa " used to tell me, that there was nothing unlikely " in the idea of our being translated from planet to " planet: I wonder if that is to be mine!' She " had no fear of death, for she had early accus- " tomed herself to think of it less as the end of " life than as the beginning of another state, and " her only dread was what I should suffer. She " never looked at me but with a smile, and even " when her approaching dissolution became visible; " when her slender limbs bespoke their mortality, " and a few tenacious sparks of life just detained " her spirit from its escape, her countenance was " serene and lovely. Oh! how did my heart bleed! " and how often did I humble myself on my knees " before God, imploring proofs of his mercy and " forgiveness in the restoration of my child! My " distracted soul forgot its unworthiness, and pray- " ed to be the object of a miracle: 'Oh God,' I " cried, 'medicine cannot avail—she is now en- " tirely in thy hands—spare her to me, oh God!— " I beseech thee spare her to me!' No—it was a " foolish prayer—her mother deserved her more " than I; the removing angel knew it, and obeyed " the mandate he had received. Away, again, flew " happiness from my cottage, and sorrow and mourn- " ing entered.

" But what then!" exclaimed Cowper, after press-

ing his handkerchief to his eyes, "He, who was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, ratifies "mourning with a blessing; and I believe it to be "pregnant with love towards the race of man: "nor was it a vain enthusiasm that guided Dr. "Young in saying,

'Smitten friends
'Are angels sent on errands full of love.'

"The stroke of misery which comes home to a "man's own breast, is his best preparative for "heaven; it breaks his heart, it renders it contrite, "and makes it a sacrifice which God will not de- "spise. Mine had not been sufficiently subdued; "mine had again begun to be proud and happy. "What though I was not impious, I had formed "anew my heaven upon earth, and should have left "it with reluctance: but now, I think warmly and "anxiously of that to which Providence has re- "moved my treasures. Yes my dear friends," said Cowper with a sigh, and pressing the hand of Emily whose tears were flowing down her cheeks, "I be- "lieve it to be a salutary blow; as such I receive "it with submission and resignation, trusting, that "he who struck it will aid me to pursue, with my "broken heart, the duties which I have yet to per- "form on earth."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The resentment of the unfortunate redounds upon themselves.

It was late when Mr. Cowper concluded his story, and as the sympathy of his friends abounded more in tears than words, he only staid a few minutes to

express the relief and satisfaction he had experienced in the communication of his misfortunes, as well as in the hope of confirming by it a friendship which he was led to desire by the kindness and virtues of a family, whom he should never have sought, but for the report of their calamity. They each shook hands with him, and he promised to bring Edmund next morning to take leave of them. The family sat some time together after he was gone, expressing their pity for his sufferings, and fully absolving him of his guilt. He had warmly interested their feelings; they loved him, and were prepared to love his sister and her children. The little they had seen of Edmund had prepossessed them in his favour; they talked of his sister Harriet without knowing her, and they anticipated the enjoyment of intimacy.

As Mr. Cowper intended to go out of town next day by the Gloucester coach, which set out at four o'clock in the afternoon, he went early with Edmund to Albemarle-street, where they took an affectionate leave of the Aubreys, with whom they exchanged promises of correspondence and occasional visits. Mrs. Aubrey sent a kind invitation to Mrs. Smyth by Mr. Cowper, and the young folks loaded Edmund with affectionate messages to Harriet, fraught with hopes of future delight. Aubrey expressed his gratification at the manner in which Cowper had renewed his acquaintance, and his sense of the services he had rendered him; assuring him that nothing could give him more pleasure than to prove his affection by being of use to Edmund. "Were you to bring him up to the church, Cow-"per," said he, "it might afford me an opportu-"nity; for, if I live, Mariton will be only the "first step in the course my friend Lord Aynsford "has in view for me."—"My good friend," replied

Cowper, "though Edmund has no fortune, it is my "intention to enable him to depend upon himself. "As he was born a gentleman, I have given him "the education of one, but as he is poor, I have "had him taught some useful arts, and the value of "industry: agriculture is his present study, it is to "be his pursuit, and if he chance to lose me, he "will be able to support his mother and sister by "it." To this Aubrey made no reply, but by shaking hands with both uncle and nephew, and joining in the farewell, which was echoed from every tongue in the room.

For some days the events of Cowper's life dwelt strongly on the imagination of his friends, and afforded them much conversation, nor did anything material occur till the day appointed for the sale of the pictures; except indeed that Mrs. Miller was in a constant bustle of packing, and preparation for the removal of the family to Mariton. As the day of sale approached, Aubrey's hopes increased; his pictures had daily drawn a crowd of fashion to Flourish's room, and some men of real judgment had spoken of many of the pieces with rapture, so that he began to extend his expectations even beyond the original cost of the paintings.

The day at length arrived. The auction-room was full, and Mr. Flourish from his desk delivered new puffs in the best style of his laudatory lore. The first painting put up was a fine Claude Loraine. "What an enchanting scene does this landscape "present," said Mr. Flourish, "the plumed wood "on the hill beyond the vale, arrayed in striking "majesty with summer's thickest robe, appears to "descend to the left in a gentle waving line, and "the orb of day, declining, skirts the fleecy top "with gold, seeming to rest upon the enlivened "edge, while the intervening foliage abates the

" power of its rays, so as to permit the eye un-
" punished to behold its glory. How beautiful the
" valley! how grateful to the sight those rich pas-
" tures, where the cattle and the fleecy tribe are
" grazing, placed so judiciously on that undulating
" surface, which the sun, as he sinks behind the
" hill, marks with varied light and shade. I see the
" eyes of all the company are charmed, and riveted
" to the spot. The rustic building to the right,
" lofty and prominent, which receives a brown tint
" from the sun's weakened rays, will irresistibly lead
" you on to trace the landscape to its verge, and
" with delight to pore along the distant country,
" adorned with fainter woods and lessening edifices,
" bounded afar by mountains, which the painter's
" skill compels your imagination to dress with
" woods, no less perfect than those his pencil has
" distinguished more boldly. What a sweet even-
" ing does the subject present! Glowing, yet mild
" and serene; nor less so that yonder slowly-moving
" cloud spreads his broad shade upon the distant
" fields."

Aubrey, who was sitting with Sensitive and Arthur, near the auctioneer's desk, was perfectly astonished at this poetic effusion, and, smiling, expressed his surprise. " Sir," said a stranger, who sat next to him, " it is entirely new; he bought it for a guinea
" from a poor poet, who in the bargain reserved the
" privilege of introducing it into a tragedy after
" Flourish had used it. The lines, for it is absolutely
" blank verse, are worth more than a guinea to
" Flourish in reputation, for the frequenters of his
" room have no objection to bombast in the mouth
" of the auctioneer, and I should think them worth
" more than ten to the owner of these paintings,
" but that the piece they describe is intrinsically

" valuable, and does not want their assistance."—" I think it a fine painting," replied Aubrey to the stranger, " and am pleased to hear you speak " so highly of it—I hope your opinion is favourable " to most of the others."—" There are some good " pictures in the collection," said the stranger, " and perhaps"—

His speech was interrupted by Flourish's raising his voice, and calling urgently on the company to put up the Claude at twelve hundred guineas. Having gradually descended to four hundred, a voice at some distance said, " a hundred and fifty." " Five " hundred," said the stranger near Aubrey—" thank you, Sir," cried Mr. Flourish, with a smile and a bow—" five hundred." Aubrey looked at the stranger with some surprise—" Oh, Sir," said he, " I do not mean to purchase it—I bid to save time " —it will go for seven hundred at least." It was soon after knocked down for seven hundred and fifty. This accuracy of judgment raised the stranger in the opinion of Aubrey, who was going to renew his conversation, when the gentleman, looking at his catalogue, exclaimed, " Why what the deuce does " he bring this forward so soon for! This fine Ma- " donna will ruin the sale." " Here," cried Flourish, " here is Raphael's most charming Madonna." —The stranger smiled. Aubrey looked round, and thought he saw a pretty general smile in the room. " His earlier Madonnas," proceeded the auctioneer —" those I mean of his middle style, are generally " of a lighter and less-taking complexion. I am " fully persuaded, though some men's judgments are " apt to be guided by particular attachments, that a " complete brown beauty is really preferable to a " perfect fair one; the bright brown gives a lustre " to all the other colours, a vivacity to the eyes,

" and a richness to the whole look, which one seeks " in vain in the whitest and most transparent skins."

Aubrey was smiling at this repetition of Flourish's puff, which had already been privately discharged at the person who applied to purchase this Madonna without bringing it to the hammer, when his ears were saluted with a laugh from the side of the room where the Madonna hung; and presently some of the company were seen getting up on the seats to look that way. Aubrey, Sensitive, and the stranger also got up to see what occasioned the laugh. The first object that struck Aubrey was Sir Kit Keeping pointing at a figure directly under the Madonna. Following the direction of his finger, he observed a handsome woman sitting and looking through a frame, not unlike that of the picture above her. At her back was a painting, of which only the ground was seen; her attitude and dress were precisely the same as the Madonna's, nor was it long before Aubrey observed the striking resemblance of their features. " This is a malicious trick," said the stranger, " the picture is not an original, nor is it " a copy; but merely an attempt at the style of " Raphael, and that very woman, about five years " ago, sat for the figure. Her husband, one Jacob, " a stockbroker, there he stands, became a bankrupt " next year, and the picture was bought for a trifle " by a collector, who had the address to dispose of " it for an original Raphael. Sir Kit Keeping him- " self was within an ace of buying it, but he took " the opinion of a good judge, and treated it with " contempt."—" You seem to speak with great cer- " tainty, Sir," said Aubrey. The stranger smiled. Flourish having observed what was passing, spoke to one of his men, who immediately went and took the frame from before the lady, and desired her to remove her seat, while Flourish endeavoured to re-

call the attention of the company, by continuing the speech he had prepared for this Madonna.

"All the best artists in the noblest age of painting, about Leo X's time, used this deeper and richer kind of colouring; indeed, the glaring lights introduced by Guido went a great way towards the declension of the art; as the enfeebling of the colours by Carlo Marati has since almost completed the fall of it in Italy. In this Madonna of Raphael's"—Flourish was here interrupted by a general laugh.—"Hush—shame!" cried Sensitive, who had attentively listened to all that the stranger had said to Aubrey, and whose nerves were suffering agony for the disgrace of his friend's Madonna. "Put up the picture, Sir," said he to Flourish, who, the moment he could be heard, asked the favour of some one of the company to mention a sum. The husband of the Madonna, in whom Aubrey now recognized the person who had proposed a private purchase of it, stood up, and with a grimace, which bespoke his certainty of possessing the picture of his wife at his own price, bid twenty guineas. "Twenty guineas!" said Flourish, in a tone of surprise. "Three hundred," cried Sensitive, with an audible voice. The stockbroker's face suddenly fell, his mouth opened, and his eye-lids were drawn up towards his brow. The connoisseurs turned their eyes with astonishment on the bidder, who was not unknown among them; whose judgment, in spite of his youth, was highly esteemed, and whose pencil had evinced talents not inferior to that of any amateur. Some of them were even staggered, and for nearly a minute watched the countenances of Sensitive, Sir Kit Keeping, and another acknowledged judge, who was in the room. The grave neutrality of the last, and Sir Kit's malicious grin, completely removed the momentary doubt raised by Sensitive's

spirited and decisive tone: no bidder followed, and the stockbroker's wife was knocked down to him.

"Generous fellow," said Aubrey to his young friend, "I feel the kindness of your attempt to give "a value to the picture: but I have not a doubt "that I have been imposed upon in the purchase of "it; and pray do not suppose that I shall suffer "your generosity to be so ill requited as to let you "have it: I consider it as bought in."—"Why so," said Sensitive, "the painting is fine, whoever be the "painter; and that the artist possesses great talents "is proved by its having passed with several con- "noisseurs for a Raphael."—"Sir," said the stranger, "it would have still passed, and would have "been sold this day for an original, had it not been "for the pains which have been taken to detect it. "Sir Kit Keeping has been buzzing it about the "room, and I know the trick of Jacob's wife to be "his contrivance."—"Are you sure of that?" cried Arthur, reaching across Sensitive and his father. "Perfectly sure," replied the stranger; "I know "the parties well."—"Infamous!" said Sensitive; "he deserves to be kicked out of the room; as for "me, I am satisfied with my purchase, and shall not "give it up." The stranger smiled, and being beckoned by a gentleman at some distance, left his seat, while Flourish was preluding the next picture with an appropriate piece of eloquence. "Sir," said a gentleman to Sensitive, "that's the celebrated "Martineau, who spends so much of his time in "Italy, whence he is just returned; he is said to be "himself the painter of the Madonna." Both Aubrey and Sensitive had heard of him, but neither had seen him before.

The latter was expressing his pleasure, and declaring the new value he set upon his purchase, when a noise was heard at the door, and immedi-

ately after a scuffle took place. In a moment the company were all on their feet, and Aubrey, among the rest, looking for the cause of the disturbance, saw Arthur, who had slipped away unperceived, dragging Sir Kit Keeping out by the nose with one hand, while with the other he kept off some of the Baronet's friends, who were attempting to disengage them, which they soon accomplished. The Baronet's nose, released from the pressure of Arthur's gripe, felt, with the return of the blood, a titillating pungency, which set him a sneezing—" 'Tcha! " 'tcha! 'tcha! damn the boy's fingers! 'tcha! " 'tcha! I'll whip the cub to death." Sensitive, delighted, attempted to hold back Aubrey, who nevertheless quickly made his way through the company, and seizing his son by the arm, sternly demanded how he dared to commit such an outrage. " I could not help it, Sir," said Arthur, " and in- " deed I have done nothing but what he deserves." —" I am extremely sorry," replied Aubrey, " to " find you so prompt in taking vengeance into your " own hands, in discovering a disposition to re- " venge—I hope the company will make some al- " lowance for your youth."—" I'll take care," cried Sir Kit, " to carry a rod for master the next time " I meet him." Sensitive smiled, and Arthur was going to speak, but Aubrey hurried him away. The Baronet affected to treat him as a boy, and suffered him to depart with his father.

Sensitive, who had followed Aubrey to the bottom of the room, returned to his seat. Sir Kit, who, not suspecting the wrath of Arthur, had gone to the lower end of the room in consequence of an anonymous message, also went back to his place, laughing at the audacity of the urchin; and Flourish resumed his occupation. The sale proceeded; the originals went off at their full value; but, unfortun-

ately, Aubrey had raised a host of enemies by daring to abstract himself suddenly from the brutality of Sir Kit Keeping's observations, the day he had called to consult him on the sale of his pictures; and every piece not genuine, or which was the least dubious, and there were many more than the owner of them thought of, had been marked. Some of these were sold for a trifle, some were not bid for at all; and the whole produced little more than a fourth of what was expected by Aubrey, who now practically learned the fable of the viper and the file: the resentment of the unfortunate redounds upon themselves.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A paternal lecture—Result of the auction—Preparations for a journey into the country—A paradox—Charles Sensitive—The family leave town.

The emotion with which Aubrey had checked his son, and hurried him from the auction room, arose less from displeasure on the immediate occasion, than from an anxious apprehension of the spirit it evinced. Arthur, whose mind had hitherto displayed only feelings of the gentlest nature, had lately shown a determination to appeal to violence. He had a few days before stunned his tutor by a blow, and, with as little consideration, had now pulled a Baronet by the nose. Aubrey, however, who, we have seen, was never precipitate himself, could not but reflect, that both these actions had been the result of noble motives; and when he thought of the part he had in those motives, love became his predominant feeling: his hand, before they got into the

street, had slipped from a gripe of the upper joint of Arthur's arm, to a gentle, familiar leaning on the lower one. "My dear Sir," said Arthur, "I hope "you are not seriously angry. You heard, as well "as I, the abominable conduct of the conceited "scoundrel."—"Arthur," replied Aubrey, "I am "more unhappy than angry: for, as your motives "were amiable, though they led to an unjustifiable "effect, anger cannot rise in my mind. But I "am, indeed, very uneasy, to discover in you such "marks of a hasty temper, and a disposition to such "violent acts of resentment, as not only shut up "all avenues to conciliation, but lead directly to the "most dreadful consequences. From your youth, "and Keeping's character, I think we shall escape "at present; but, were you two or three years "older, and he, according to fashionable notions, "a man of spirit, you would be driven to the al-"ternative of fighting a duel, or giving up the opi-"nion of the world. To be indifferent in the latter "case is incompatible with the feelings of a young "man in your situation of life; and, on the other "hand, you never would be able to bear the re-"flection of putting a man to death."—"I hope," replied Arthur, "that I shall never experience such "a misfortune. I would sooner let a man fire at me, "than I would fire at him."—"Then," said Aubrey, "you ought to be cautious, very cautious, not to throw "yourself into a predicament of this kind."—"But, "how is it possible," cried Arthur, "to hear or see "one I love most dearly, injured or insulted; to "know that a father, who is all goodness and affec-"tion, is used unworthily, without flying upon the "wretch that dares to treat him ill!"

This was a very delightful and seductive argument to a father: Aubrey felt its force; but, at the same time, resisted the seduction. Pressing his

boy's arm with a warmth that showed the gratification of his heart, he said: "Amiable propensities "must be made to yield to sober duty. Consider "too, my dear Arthur, that by not submitting in- "dignation to the conduct of judgment, you must, "in all likelihood, entail misery on the man whom "you love. Resentment is natural; but the brave "and polished never evince it by impetuous attacks "or scurrilous words: they have recourse to calm "looks, and dignified language. The mistakes of "such men are easily rectified: but the effects of "passion are rarely counteracted, till a crime is "committed. If you mean to punish every scoun- "drel you meet, you must prepare yourself for the "character of a duellist; a character, which, it is "evident, from your shuddering at the bare idea "of depriving another of life, you are not calculated "to sustain."—"I hope I never shall," said Arthur, "for nothing can be more odious than a "duellist; I mean, a captious man, ever ready to "appeal to a pistol for the decision of differences; "but when one is ill-treated without a cause, and "without any reason for submission to ill-treatment, "must one put up with it?"—"No," replied Aubrey, "but the means to be adopted for resent- "ment, and attention to the consequences of those "means, will always distinguish the man of sense "from the proud, impetuous man, who conceives "he is not born to bear any mortification, and "abruptly flies to gross and common means of "wreaking his passion on the offender. I am now "speaking of men of the world; men who consider "themselves subject to the law of honour; among "whom there are degrees of distinction, from him "who blusters on the slightest opposition, to him "who, too wise to be a challenger, pays his tribute "to fashionable opinion by obeying a summons;

" and who, exposing his life to the less scrupulous " dealer of death, fires his pistol in the air. But " I hope, my dear Arthur, you will soon be con- " vinced, if you are not already, that however im- " perious this law of honour is over men of the " world, it is not only inconsistent with the divine " law, but is in itself neither rational nor amiable: " yet, as I do not wish you to defy the world, I " would have you to be so guarded in your conduct, " as not to incur the alternative. This happy course " is successfully pursued by the generality of men " of honour: for, how many thousands are there of " the nicest feelings who have never challenged, nor " been challenged? Though we hear frequently of " duels, the number is nothing, compared with the " mass of men of honour, who pass their life without " similar encounters; and of those that happen, in " nineteen out of twenty, the combatants are not of " the most respectable classes who acknowledge the " law of honour as paramount to all others. In the " army, where every man must be brave, and where " jealousy of honour is carried to the highest pitch, " we seldom hear, that those who are greatly dis- " tinguished for talents and courage, have had the " misfortune of deciding private quarrels in a duel. " What is the reason of this? A knowledge of the " world; a knowledge of the passions of other men, " and a command of their own. It is the result of " patience and of prudence early learned, combined " with good temper, which, to the honour of human " nature I say it, is more general than bad temper. " But not to go from yourself: your temper, my " dear Arthur, is certainly good; and till our mis- " fortunes, I have thought you sufficiently gentle; " but, if your impatience increase with every trial, " you will soon be a very different character from " what I have hitherto hoped. Sir Kit Keeping

"has, I allow, behaved very ill; but, if you were "determined to disgrace him, I think, you might "have done it better by exposing his conduct. All "who heard the circumstances, would have parti- "cipated your indignation: and what can be more "satisfactory than to know, that the worthy par- "take in our resentments? Whereas, before any "body is prepared to espouse your feelings, all are "roused against you, by considering your action as "the violent effect of a passionate temper, which is "always offensive, but particularly in youth."—"My "dear Sir," said Arthur, with a tear starting to his eye, "I feel I have done wrong—I ask your par- "don." This conviction of Arthur's mind delighted Aubrey's heart. The spirit of his boy could not but be pleasing to him; yet that pleasure was alloyed by the dread of its taking a wrong turn: and he endeavoured to inculcate those principles by which it might be restrained, and kept in its proper channel. He compared the submission of Themistocles, in the famous speech to the officer who raised his cane over his head—"Strike, but hear" —to the—"you know where I am to be found"— of modern honour; and brought to his mind the dignified moderation of Philip, who, when told at his own court by an Athenian ambassador, that the greatest service he could render the Athenians would be to hang himself, calmly said: "Go, tell "your superiors, that those who dare make use of "such insolent language, are more haughty and "less peaceably inclined, than those who can for- "give them."

This paternal lecture was given in the streets, as Aubrey, leaning on his son, conducted him homeward to Albemarle-street. The trick of Jacob to procure his wife at a low price, and Sir Kit's sneezing, created at first some amusement and laughter

in the nursery, where Aubrey and Arthur found Mrs. Aubrey, the girls, Arthur-William, and Mrs. Miller. But Arthur seriously repeated his sorrow for the folly he had been guilty of, which led to a consideration of the injury likely to accrue from the malice of Sir Christopher. As Aubrey's judgment had been deceived in one instance, and that rendered so public, it was natural to fear, that general doubts might be spread, and the sale considerably injured. Not that Aubrey, or any of his family, could have a wish to impose a single painting on a purchaser, for what it was not; but should he himself have been generally imposed upon, and his pictures fail him, his hopes would vanish, his plans be frustrated, and instead of a fund to support a decent appearance at Mariton till he became the Rector, he might not receive enough to pay his debts in town, and carry him to his curacy.

Mortified by the events of the morning, he felt no desire to return to the auction, and leaving the whole business to the ability and management of Mr. Flourish, whom he had desired to dispose of all the paintings without reserve, he passed the rest of the day in conversing with his family, and in adjusting his accounts for payment. Having examined all the bills, he found the amount of their totals to be twelve hundred pounds and a little more. This was exclusive of his servants' wages for the last quarter, and of rent for the whole year, which, together with an allowance for articles not stated in his computation, he estimated at a sum, that would make, with the bills, fifteen hundred pounds. In spite of the general equality of Aubrey's spirits, he remained in a very anxious state of suspense, from the moment he concluded this estimate, till he received the auctioneer's statement of the product of his sale. The removal of his suspense increased his anxiety;

for having yielded himself to the dominion of hope on this occasion, far more fully than he had ever done on any former one, his depression was proportionally deeper, when he became acquainted with the extent of his finances, as shown at the bottom of Flourish's account; where, instead of twelve thousand pounds, he read three thousand two hundred and fifty. From this sum his alarmed imagination instantly substracted fifteen hundred, which left but one thousand seven hundred and fifty, and he at the same moment recollected with horror, that in his deductions he had included neither the check which had gone off with Elton, nor the sum at which the spurious Madonna had been knocked down, which together, left him six hundred pounds in debt to Sensitive.

Mrs. Aubrey was at first equally disappointed and unhappy, but the inutility of repining, and the fear of injuring the spirits of their beloved children, aided the natural tendency of their minds to resignation in lessening the force of this blow. After experiencing a while the vexation which resulted from their disappointment, they began to consider the fair side of their lot; they had still a fund in hand, which though small, would enable them to make their family comfortable at Mariton, and it could not be very long before their income would be increased by the friendship of Lord Aynsford. In the mean time they determined, as soon as they arrived at the Rectory, to lay down a system of domestic economy, to which they would rigorously adhere. The hopes that followed these reflections and resolutions not only restored the complacency of Aubrey's mind, and that of his amiable Emily, but imparted unusual spirits. They repeated their unaltered affection for each other, said and felt that it had experienced no diminution from that ardent

love with which they had been mutually inspired in the Cambridgeshire cottage, gaily rejoined their children, and, instead of bewailing the effects of Sir Kit's villany, found subjects of merriment in the Baronet's follies, in the imposition of Jacob's wife on the many connoisseurs who had admired the Madonna, and in the ridiculous, unsuccessful trick of the stockbroker to purchase his wife's picture for a trifle.

The spring was now advancing; for some time the young people had been feeding their imagination with the pleasures of the country, and in every casual glimpse of verdure caught in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, anticipated the enjoyment of the rural scenery around Mariton. Impatient for their flight, they had not only exhorted Mrs. Miller to diligence in packing up, but busily assisted her, and every thing was ready for departure before the sale of the pictures took place.

Disgusted with town, from the incidents which had lately occurred, and sharing the pleasing anticipations of his family, Aubrey had nothing to detain him; he therefore gave orders to Cæsar to see all the packages, which were directed to be left at Loughborough, safely delivered at the warehouse of the Leicester waggon immediately, and to take care that the travelling coach was in perfect order for the journey. He now waited only to receive the sum his paintings had produced, which was collected without delay. Having placed it in the hands of a banker, his first care was to discharge his debts. This was soon done among those who considered the payment of money as the criterion of integrity, but not so easily accomplished with one who imagined that the sure and lasting possession of wealth consisted only in that which is given away; a position which, however paradoxical and silly in the

opinion of some modern wise men, has descended to us through many centuries as the maxim of an ancient sage*. Charles Sensitive, a youth of fortune, born in the reign of George III. early an orphan, and liberally educated, had received from nature a set of nerves formed to impress the truth of the sage's paradox on his mind, and the money he had parted with on benevolent occasions always gave him more enjoyment than the reflection of the fortune he inherited. An only child, unincumbered with debts and portions, unexpensive in his habits, and having much more than he wanted, he could perceive no wisdom in curbing an emotion so delightful in itself, and in the indulgence of which he foresaw no ill consequence; for though his hand was open as his heart, he was aware that it would be imprudent and foolish to diminish his means, and the danger to which he was exposed did not proceed from indiscriminate or thoughtless generosity, so much as from an unsuspicious disposition, which led him to repose full confidence in whomever he thought worthy to be called his friend. The securities into which he entered, hinted at by Mr. Cowper, had never molested his thoughts, for he did not conceive they would implicate him; and the sums he had disposed of, without a desire of return, were so much amassed, in the sense of the maxim, the spirit of which was congenial to his soul.

When Aubrey called upon him to take leave, and to return the money for the check, and that paid to Flourish for the purchase of the Madonna, Sensitive, far from viewing it as a criterion of uprightness, saw with pain that his friend came to deprive him of part of his treasure. He debated the point a considerable time, and at length Aubrey was oblig-

* Quas dederis, solas semper habebis opes.

ed to compromise the matter, by suffering him to retain Jacob's wife, which he persisted in valuing highly as the production of a genius, though not of Raphael, provided he would receive the three hundred pounds he had lent, the loss of which he was striving to add to his store, by arguing, rather jesuitically, that Aubrey had not touched a shilling of it, *ergo*, it would be a great hardship to pay three hundred pounds for nothing, and it was no time for him to be so nice. The business being thus settled, though Aubrey was secretly determined always to consider himself in debt to his friend, the amount he had paid for the painting, they took an affectionate leave of each other, and the benevolent Sensitive promised to visit Mariton in the autumn.

Prepared for their journey, the Aubreys, who had by no means yet divested themselves of the habits of fashionable life, debated the important question of taking leave of their acquaintances in due form; and it was resolved, in spite of the causes of disgust which had occurred, to go through the usual ceremony. Accordingly, a few days were lost in rapid visits to those families, whom they considered as the most friendly; and, in delivering cards, *pour pendre congé*, at houses which they had no desire of ever entering more.

The day fixed for their departure arrived: the servants had previously received their wages, with the advance of a month, but waited to see the family off; for though they had lived with them only a short time, they had seen enough to respect and to love. The old travelling coach with four horses drew up to the door, followed by a post-chaise and pair. The imperials being fastened on the roof of the coach, and the luggage tied on, the key of the house was delivered to the landlord, who had received his rent, and had attended at Aubrey's de-

sire, to take possession of the premises. Mrs. Aubrey, Arthur, Emily, Arthurina, and Arthur-William, with Mrs. Miller, went into the coach; and Aubrey, with Cæsar, took possession of the post-chaise. The tears and blessings of the domestics attended their departure, as they drove from the door, bidding a long adieu to London.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Gloomy prospects—The Rector of Mariton—His manner of receiving Aubrey.

"Joy and grief decide characters. What gives "its zest to prosperity, what embitters adversity "marks the master-passion of the heart, the object "of which forms the grand interest of existence, "the God of this life—the vortex, the centre, "the comparative point from which we set out, on "which we fix, to which we irresistibly return— "that for the loss of which we are inconsolable; "that which we rescue from the gripe of dan-"ger with equal anxiety and boldness." It is evident, that the two prevailing passions which sometimes combine to rule the same heart, and sometimes divide their dominion over men at the period of life which Aubrey had attained, bore no sway, either united or separate, over his mind. Neither power, nor wealth, was the object of his idolatry; and he had never had occasion till very lately, to consider them as means for heightening or securing that which gave to his life its chief energy and value. He had shared the common enjoyments of fashionable society, without feeling them of much importance: but his soul was wrapt up in family-af-

fection; his wife, and his children, were his idols. On his prosperity they had bestowed all the relish it possessed; they had rendered him indifferent to every other: even the Being to whom in his youth, he had, perhaps inconsiderately, dedicated his service, though reverenced and periodically worshiped, had comparatively excited lukewarm emotions, such as suffered him without pain to neglect his professional duties, to permit merry blasphemies to pass unchecked, and to confine the diffusion of religious hope to his own family. The joy they had given to his prosperity was now damped by the change of his fortune, and the fears which assailed his imagination. Though he had no desire for wealth, though he, and every one of his family, could relinquish luxury without a sigh, he could not so easily reflect on the loss of respect and consideration, which he saw was likely to attend the loss of fortune. He had already experienced some degree of it, and fancy was busy in presenting him new mortifications at Mariton, in which the beloved objects of his heart would probably be personally included. While he was under the impression of these thoughts his grief would rise to a degree of emotion he had never felt before; and notwithstanding his natural equality of temper, they had frequently recurred during the two last days in town. He determined, however, to veil his feelings, and had succeeded tolerably well; yet, he feared his dejection would show itself in spite of his efforts, on a long journey in the same carriage; and he had, therefore, put Arthur into the coach, and taken his seat beside his faithful Cæsar. His restraint was thus removed, and he yielded himself to the anxiety of his mind, and to anticipations of possible indignities. Among other things, his imagination dwelt on the mortifying degradation of his first interview with his employer, in

which he figured to himself the practical lessons he should receive on the difference between a rector and a curate.

These painful emotions were sometimes broken and relieved by reflections on the treasure he possessed in such a wife as his Emily, in such children as were growing up into men and women around him. Young as they were, he assured himself, that he could rely on the strength of their minds for happiness, independent of the opinion of the whole world, if that opinion were the base offspring of caprice and prejudice. "They are healthy and "pure, Cæsar," cried he abruptly, after being long absorbed in thought—"they have excellent facul-"ties, their minds are improved, their souls are re-"plete with love and virtue. My Emily and I can "complete their education—Oh, excellent mother! "Oh, endearing wife!—Then, there is Miller, and "you, my faithful Cæsar: what have I to fear? we "are a world ourselves: we will defy the greater "one, and be happy in spite of its frowns." As Aubrey spoke, the emotion which had forced its way in words, had also impelled his hand to seize and press the arm of Cæsar. The pressure was felt at the worthy fellow's heart, and tears started to his eyes. "Master!" said he, "I very sorry to see you un-"happy; it no for me to advise you: but, remember "what you have so often said yourself."—"What's "that, Cæsar?"—"You no tell Mass' Arthur and "Miss Emily, that fancy make more unhappiness, "than real misfortune?"—"Very true, Cæsar; and "we do, indeed, suffer ourselves unworthily to be "made the sport of fancy; but I never had cause "before, to admit the fears that have lately tor-"mented me."—"What you fear, my Massa?"—"The consequences of poverty, my good Cæsar."—"Eh! Massa! how you can talk so? You have

" 'nough to live upon yet, and well too, wid care. " Massa, I will look to every ting very carefully— " I will see dat noting shall waste."—" I know you " will, Cæsar," said Aubrey, again pressing the poor fellow's arm; " but the dread of want is not " the thought that pains me. I hope, we shall never " feel that; but, there are other consequences of " poverty; neglect, derision: nor would these affect " me; but, as they will involve those who are dearer " to me than myself—your mistress, my children." —" Every body will love them," cried Cæsar, warmly—" every body will love them—they never " proud themselves, nobody is going to be proud to " them; and, if some should be so foolish, my mis- " tress will make them keep their distance."— " Yes, Cæsar," said Aubrey, " we are right; and " that was precisely the thought that roused me from " my reverie. We have real happiness within our- " selves, and we shall be the more sure of preserving " it, by excluding all who are likely to contaminate " it." As he spoke the words, the chaise drove into the town of Leicester, and Aubrey soon alighted at the principal inn.

The family had passed a night at Bedford, and when they proceeded the next day, Aubrey, taking the lead in the post-chaise, pushed on to bespeak apartments. These being secured, he enquired of the landlord for Dr. Searle. " I saw him this morn- " ing, Sir," said the landlord—" he regularly rides " out every day in his post-chaise with his niece: " he is just the same as he has been for years past, " neither better nor worse—we have a fine air here, " Sir, and Mr. Polson, the apothecary, says, the " Doctor's plain puddings and punctual exercise " will certainly prolong his life through another ge- " neration. Yes, Sir, he goes down hill very gently, " and the slower the steeper the pitch." Aubrey

never heard an allusion to the decline of the Rector of Mariton's life, without an awkward sensation; for though he knew his heart incapable of an immoral wish, he could not but feel, that the temporal interest of his family was connected with the eternal preferment of the incumbent; and he often ejaculated, "God forgive me!" without the guilt, for the pardon of which he prayed. "Does he ever go to "Mariton?" said Aubrey.—"Never, Sir," replied the landlord, "he would not recover the journey. "He is as regular as clockwork in every thing: in "the distance he rides, in the quantity he eats, in "the time he sleeps. It is what keeps him alive, "Sir."—"What," asked Aubrey, "is the distance "to Mariton?"—"Fifteen miles, Sir; it is a little "beyond Loughborough, to the left of the turnpike-"road. It is one of the pleasantest villages in Eng-"land, and there is a great number of genteel fa-"milies in, and near it." After a few more inquiries, Aubrey dismissed the landlord, by desiring him to tell Cæsar to bring in his writing-desk. Though Mariton was but one stage farther, it was his intention to remain at Leicester, till the parsonage was ready for his family; and, however unpalatable, it was incumbent upon him to pay his respects to the Rector, before he proceeded. He accordingly wrote a note to Dr. Searle, informing him of his arrival, and requesting to know when it would be convenient for him to receive a visit.

While his messenger was gone with the letter, the coach arrived, and Aubrey, surrounded by his family, felt his spirits influenced by the smiles and gaiety which never failed to attend them. They declared their joy at quitting London, talked of the pleasure they had experienced in the course of their journey, and wished dinner was ready, for country air and travelling had made them as keen as hawks.

As they were going to sit down to table, the messenger returned with an answer from Dr. Searle, who expressed his satisfaction at Aubrey's arrival, and requested the favour of his company that evening, hoping also, that he would stay to supper. This note, which was written in a style very different from what Aubrey expected, was highly agreeable to the whole group, and gave an additional relish to their repast.

Dr. Searle had led a life which the world had suffered to pass without reproach, and which he could himself contemplate with satisfaction. His independence, his charity, the gentleness of his manners, and his neutrality in politics, or rather his sincerity, which exalted him above party, and convinced men of different opinions, that he was solely influenced by truth and general good, had conciliated the goodwill of all; and the consciousness of having performed his duties to the best of his ability, of having befriended the poor, and of having set an example to the rich, left him at peace with his own mind. The early mastery of his passions, and his temperance in the enjoyment of the good things of this world, had preserved him from bodily sufferings; and his approach to the termination of his life was the gentle progress of unthwarted nature. His faculties were in their wane, his frame was enfeebled, but the grave had no terrors for him, and he was descending to it with ease and cheerfulness. It was not till his voice became inaudible, and his attention wavering, that he entirely resigned his pulpit; and taking the advice of his friends, gave up his remaining years to repose of body and of mind. His understanding, which had been endowed with excellent powers, still possessed a great degree of its elasticity, and his conversation, though unequal, retained a sufficient charm to attract both

old and young, so that he continued to have what company he chose, and whenever he pleased. At the time he became acquainted with Mr. Cowper by means of his nephew, as we have seen, he was turned of sixty; but the vigour of his constitution was unimpaired, he was active in the exercise of his faculties, his preaching and his practice were consistent, and while these endeared him to the poor, his fortune and his manners ensured him welcome among the rich. Cowper, when he received his pupils from him, was impressed with a high respect for him, and had in his turn created an esteem which was followed by a warm reciprocal attachment. He had occasionally visited the old gentleman with his wards, a custom which he afterwards kept up when the young men had left him. Dr. Searle had been at the university with Aubrey's father, and during Cowper's last visit a conversation respecting the fatal will took place, which led to the renewal of the friendship between Aubrey and Cowper, as has been already related. The latter had obtained the disposal of the vacant curacy solely with the view of solacing misfortune, but was doubly gratified when he found his old fellow-student and his family possessing claims to esteem still higher than to commiseration, and he had consequently written a letter to the Rector of Mariton, bestowing freely praises which he thought they merited, and which were not the less warm that the congeniality he found in his friend's circle had drawn forth from him at large the story of his own misfortunes, and the secret feelings of his heart.

Cowper's panegyric on his friends was very pleasing to the old Doctor, and prepared him to receive Aubrey with kindness and respect. On his being announced the Doctor rose from his easy chair, advanced with an engaging smile, and took him into

his arms. Aubrey was a little surprised at the warmth of this reception, but his surprise soon changed to admiration, respect, and love. "I am heartily glad "you are come, my son," said the Doctor; "I "have been longing to see you for this week past: "ever since I received our friend Cowper's letter "I have been wishing for your arrival. I am an old "man, as you see, in the vale of years; but I have "a warm heart still for those who are worthy of it, "and when Cowper undertakes to make friendships "between men, the usual ceremonies and trials are "unnecessary." He then pressed Aubrey's hand, and introduced him to his niece, Mrs. Searle, who had been reading to amuse her uncle, and to his grand-niece, who was at work by her mother's side. The former, an amiable and handsome woman, between thirty and forty, was the widow of that Mr. Searle mentioned by Mr. Cowper, and the latter, Amelia, an innocent pretty girl, about fourteen, was their only child. They received Aubrey not only politely, but with a pleasure and cordiality which could not have been more marked had he been in full possession of Aubrey-hall. They were no sooner seated than Mrs. Searle, with an interest which increases the charms of a handsome face, and renders an ordinary one beautiful, enquired for Mrs. Aubrey, and when the family would be at Leicester. On hearing that they were all at the inn—"Dear "me!" she exclaimed, "why did not you mention "them in your note to my uncle? I should have "come up immediately myself, to have requested "the favour of Mrs. Aubrey to come to us without "ceremony."—"Is it, think you, too late now?" said the Doctor. "Perhaps, Sir," replied Mrs. Searle, "the journey may have fatigued her, but at "all events it is not too late for me to go and ex-"press our wishes. Come Amy, get our hats and

" cloaks."—" Do, go my dears," said the old man, " and if they do not come back with you, sit a little " with them, and engage them to dine with us to- " morrow." Mrs. Searle, saying she should return before supper, and that in the mean time she left the gentlemen to take care of each other, went away with Amelia.

How different was this reception from that presented in the despondent reveries of Aubrey. Left alone with the Doctor, he gazed with delight on the placid and smiling countenance of virtuous old age; and his imagination, purified of the chimeras of pride and debasement, of rector and curate, admitted the pleasing ideas of friendship with a saint lingering on the confines of mortality. He sat down in good humour with himself and charmed with his host, who talked chiefly of Aubrey's father, with whom he had been acquainted at an early period of life, and of Cowper their mutual friend. Of the latter he related several anecdotes, with which Aubrey was unacquainted, as proofs of the resolution and fortitude with which their friend was endowed, after the dreadful affliction that had deprived him of his reason for a considerable time. " That cala- " mity," said the Doctor, " seemed necessary to " form his character; at least, he himself dates the " origin of his reflection from it, and paints his " state previous to that as merely the vague guid- " ance of sensation. He says it made him a think- " ing man, and immoveably fixed him in the plan of " considering every future action of his life in re- " ference to eternity. Severe then as was the blow, " how great a blessing has it proved! Other cala- " mities have appeared trifles to him; he has borne " penury with patience, and reproach with resigna- " tion; he has lived on bread and water to avoid " debt; he has toiled to discharge those contracted

" at the thoughtless period of his life, and he has
" borne in silence the unmerited calumny of the
" world, in consideration of the shame he was con-
" scious of deserving. At the time my nephew met
" him in London, he was enduring with the forti-
" tude of a Stoic distresses under which there are
" but few, bred as he had been, who would not have
" sunk. From these he honourably relieved him-
" self by rendering invaluable services to two or-
" phans, for which he received the stipulated salary
" of a tutor; nor has it been in their power or mine
" to prevail upon him to accept any additional re-
" compence. He says he was overpaid in being re-
" stored to an independence which, by rendering
" our offers unnecessary, enforces a refusal of them.
" But in rejecting them he voluntarily solicited a
" species of obligation which reflects more honour
" on the obliged than on the obligers: the request
" was to support him not only with our purses, but
" with our influence, in a scheme of benevolence
" which he had planned with a hope of meriting, in
" some degree, the atonement of his sins. He goes
" yearly into different parts of the country in quest
" of the unfortunate; he investigates, he verifies
" their afflictions; he states their cases, he circu-
" lates them with his signature. Some persons re-
" quest him to be the medium of relief, others take
" pleasure in conveying it themselves. His scheme
" is known only to a few; but though the immediate
" patrons of it are not numerous, they diffuse its
" influence to their friends and connexions. It is
" not always, however, that money is the means of
" relief; there are delicate cases which require ma-
" nagement. Obscure merit is to be protected
" against envy, the weak against the powerful, the
" slandered to be restored to reputation, malice is
" to be deprived of its sting, and the triumph of

" vice over virtue is to be reversed. Cowper is " often fortunate enough, by putting cases of this " kind in a clear point of view, to give rise to in- " quiries, the result of which crowns his benevolent " aim with success. Then it is he glows with plea- " sure, then he confesses his obligation to the sup- " porters of his scheme, and feels himself favoured " of heaven."

Aubrey enjoyed this account of his friend, and cordially united with Dr. Searle in extolling his virtues. " I am much indebted to him," said the Doctor, " for prevailing on you to come into the coun- " try to commence a friendship with an old man, " and to undertake for me those duties which I am " too feeble to perform myself; and I hope when " you are settled at Mariton, that I shall often have " the pleasure of seeing you and your family here, " for though I cannot move so far, the distance is " nothing to young people." The urbanity of the Doctor's manners, the kindness of his language, the evident sincerity of his sentiments, charmed the heart of Aubrey, who, as the patriarch spoke, inwardly blessed him: " O blessed be thy age!—O " Rector! live for ever!"

All his imaginary mortifications being completely dissipated, it was with pleasure he saw Mrs. Searle and Amelia return, accompanied by his family. Mrs. Aubrey, who knew how to be ceremonious where ceremony was necessary, was no less skilful in judging of its necessity; she made it the barrier of unmeaning civility, but she possessed too warm a heart not to sacrifice it to real good, and she read at once the character of her inviters, and the unsophisticated nature of the invitation in the amiable countenances and manners of the mother and daughter. Far, therefore, from framing any excuse,

she was delighted to show her readiness to cultivate the regard of the Doctor and his family, and leaving Arthur-William to the care of Mrs. Miller, resigned herself with Arthur and the two girls to the charge of Mrs. Searle. The old gentleman was charmed with this mark of attention; the evening was spent in pleasant and friendly conversation, and Mrs. Aubrey was soon as much delighted with the Doctor as her husband was. It was natural that Mariton should be talked of, and the Aubreys learned that they were expected there with much impatience; for they had been mentioned as likely to be the inhabitants of the parsonage, even before Cowper had reached London, or proposed the curacy to Aubrey; and Mr. Dodson, the late curate, having received intelligence of his acceptance of it as soon as Cowper's letter arrived, had confirmed the news, and was only waiting his arrival at Mariton to leave it, in order to go to the vicarage to which he had been presented. On hearing this, Aubrey said, that not knowing the state of the parsonage-house, he had intended to leave his family at Leicester, till he had prepared for their reception at Mariton, but that he would proceed early in the morning, that he might release him. "By all means," said the Doctor, "leave Mrs. Aubrey to the care of "my niece, and go yourself: Mr. Dodson will put "you in possession of the church on Sunday, which "is only the day after to-morrow. You will see the "state of your house, order in what may be neces-"sary for your family, and return to us in the be-"ginning of the week." This was accordingly determined upon, and at ten o'clock, the hour at which the Doctor regularly retired, the Aubreys took leave for the night, and went back to the inn. The family were unanimous in their opinion of their host:

" What a fine old man! what a good old man! what " a friendly soul!" was echoed from one to the other. " God bless his dear old heart!" said Mrs. Aubrey. " Amen!" said Aubrey; " long may it " be ere I experience the friendship of Lord Ayns- " ford! O Rector! live for ever!"

THE END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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